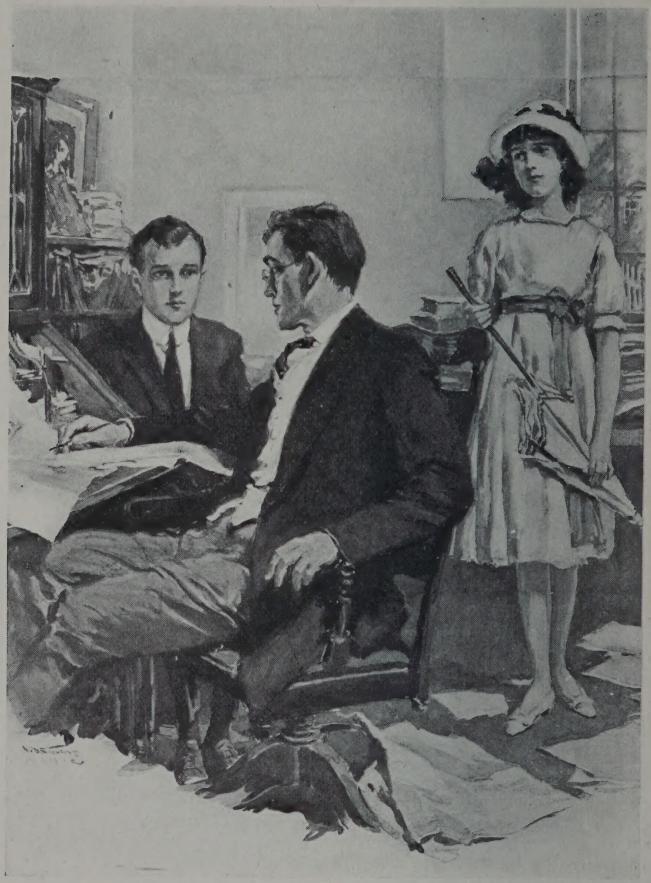
Sarah Brewster's Relatives

Elia W. Peattie

SARAH BREWSTER'S RELATIVES



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"GO ON, BOY," SAID MR. CARBERRY REASSURINGLY

SARAH BREWSTER'S RELATIVES

By Elia W. Peattie

With Illustrations by
W. D. Stevens

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From drawings by W. D. Stevens

SARAH BREWSTER'S RELATIVES

I

SARAH HERSELF

Into the little drawing-room of the Riverside Drive apartment Sarah Brewster's stepmother came sweeping with an air even more businesslike than usual. The silken lining of her gray walking-dress gave forth a brisk rustling, and her abundant plumes fell about her handsome head in the most becoming fashion.

Sarah rose from the depth of an easy chair, and smiled a chilly welcome.

"My dear!" Mrs. Brewster protested. "Such a light to read in!"

Sarah looked about her as if to apologize for the gathering dusk. The snow was falling lightly outside in the bleak, pallid twilight.

Mrs. Brewster touched the electric button, and lighted up the room.

"Draw the shades, child," she commanded. "Why don't you take a little responsibility when I'm away? I believe you'd sit in the house with your nose in a book from morning till night if you were left to yourself. Upon my word, I doubt if you'd even go to your meals."

Mrs. Brewster gave her beplumed hat, her furs, and her cloak to the maid who answered her summons.

"Why did n't you light up, Marie? The house is as gloomy as a cave."

"Miss Sarah preferred not to have the light, ma'am."

"I see. And did you take Miss Sarah for a walk this afternoon, Marie?"

"Miss Sarah preferred not to go, ma'am."

"Very well, Marie. That's all, thank you."

Sarah was still standing, and still smiling her little, cold, defiant smile. Mrs. Brewster removed her glasses, and wiped the moisture from them; replacing them on her fine aquiline

nose, she looked through them at her young stepdaughter.

"Sit down, Sarah," Mrs. Brewster said. "I want to talk to you."

The little girl obeyed, but with a look that seemed to refuse either to give or to accept favors.

"It is time, Sarah," said Mrs. Brewster, "for us to come to an understanding. When your father died, your Uncle Robert Carberry wanted to take you and bring you up with his own girls. It would have been easier and pleasanter for me, perhaps, to let him do so. But your uncle had heavy burdens to carry, and I had none whatever. I wanted to do my full duty to you for your father's sake, and so I decided to keep you with me, where you could have special training."

Sarah looked up with something like interest. Her stepmother was speaking of a matter about which she had thought much.

"But I believe that I made a mistake. You have not learned to like me, and I'm

not sure that I've been able to love you. You've held me off, and I haven't known how to draw you to me. Now I'll not say that you are any more to blame for this than I am. I merely think that our living together has been a failure."

Sarah could feel herself prickling from head to foot. She never before had heard plain speaking like that, and it made her uncomfortable. At the same time she was nearer to liking her stepmother at that moment than she had been for a long time.

"I'm not saying all this to hurt your feelings," added Mrs. Brewster hastily, as she noticed the blush. "I'm saying it because I want to come to a right understanding with you." She paused a moment. "I'm going to be married next month, Sarah," she said, and her voice quivered slightly. "I could n't ask you to live with me then. It would n't be fair to you or to me or to — any one. So I've written to your Uncle Robert, and you are to go to him."

Sarah looked across at Mrs. Brewster with

her level, lonely gaze. It was an expression that had always called for Mrs. Brewster's pity, but along with the pity was a little resentment. Need the child look like that?

"Whom are you going to marry, mamma?" she asked gravely.

A delicate flush crept through the old-ivory hues of Mrs. Brewster's face. "The Baron von Hulst," she said. "We shall live in Germany."

Sarah reflected a moment.

"When am I to go, mamma?" she inquired.

"You go next week, Sarah. Fortunately, the baron has friends who are on their way to Yellowstone Park, — a gentleman and his wife, — and you are to be placed in their charge."

Sarah blinked, and was silent. She was being sent away from everything she had known — from the luxurious apartment high above the sparkling drive; from the tutors whom she disliked, but whose store of knowledge she valued; from Marie, who had waited

on her hand and foot ever since she could remember; and, above all, from her stepmother, whom Sarah had liked to think she hated, but whose care, after all, had never failed her, and whose word to her had never been broken.

Sarah was only thirteen years of age, but she had a keen little brain, and a cold little heart. She had been bereft of her mother so early in life that she could not even remember her; and her father had died while she was still a very little girl. Since then she had been indulged rather than loved. Her tutors, Marie, and her stepmother had done their conscientious best to train her; but no one had asked anything of her; all had united in serving her. There had been no call made upon her energies, beyond the requirement that she should learn her lessons; and to Sarah lessons were no burden. She learned them easily, yet without zest, for, studying alone as she did, there was no one with whom to compete.

So there she stood, a proud, lonely, per-

verse, bewildered child, at odds with her world, and, for all her brightness, lacking the kind of knowledge that could tell her the cause of her unhappiness.

For unhappy she certainly was. The taste of life was bitter in her mouth. She knew of nothing that she wanted; she looked forward to nothing.

Mrs. Brewster had not finished.

"I have some property of my own, and I am marrying a man of considerable wealth. It seems only fair, therefore, that everything that was your father's should go to you. Even the furniture will be yours. I shall have it packed and placed in storage for you. It is really beautiful, as you will come to realize when you grow older; your mother selected it piece by piece. I think it is worth while for you to pay the storage on these things until you need them."

Sarah looked about her at the familiar furniture. She was dimly conscious for the first time that she loved it, and that it had been the background of all her strange, treas-

ured, half-sullen hours of reading and day-dreaming.

"There are other things, too," continued her stepmother; "a few jewels, some miniatures, some fine books; all will be put away for you, and will be delivered to you at the proper time. To-morrow I shall arrange each detail relating to these matters. Then I shall at once make what preparations are necessary for your Western journey."

Something seemed to strike on Sarah's heart like cold little hammers.

"But will they really *want* me, mamma?" she cried.

"Who, child? Your Uncle Robert? Oh, yes, indeed. He's written the most cordial letters."

Yet Sarah did not feel sure.

"You used to say that I was to go to boarding-school, mamma," she said. "They 're sure to want me there — if I pay!"

"You are a strange child, Sarah," Mrs. Brewster replied. "Paying people for things does n't really make them love you. You'll

find that out. You've got to accept the love and good-will that is offered, and be thankful for it. And you must give love in return."

Sarah gave a dry little laugh, and at the sound of it Mrs. Brewster turned sharply round on her.

"You may laugh if you like, Sarah, but for my part I feel very much more like crying. Such a failure as we have made of everything between us! I'm sure I don't see why you could n't have loved me." She stood over the girl with the expression and attitude of a ruffled hawk.

For a moment it almost seemed as if Sarah's lip trembled.

"I don't see why, either, mamma," she said wistfully. "I'm sure my life's a perfect ruin!"

She stood up as Mrs. Brewster left the room, and, glancing at the wall opposite, caught the reflection of herself in a mirror — a slender girl with a long, sallow face, and heavy braids of brown hair. Her costume of russet was fashionable, but it hung

on her in a spiritless way, brightened only by the necklace of gold beads that her stepmother had given her for Christmas.

Sarah looked long at the reflection. Then she addressed it angrily.

"I'd just hate you if I met you anywhere!" she cried. "What's the matter with you, anyway, you horrid, horrid thing!"

But no answer was forthcoming, and she walked slowly to her room to dress for dinner. As she looked about at the dainty apartment, with its chintz hangings and its charming toilet-table, and glanced into her white bathroom, she wondered whether they had such things anywhere outside New York. It seemed very improbable.

"Wisconsin," she mused; "Wisconsin!" It sounded remote and not interesting, but she remembered with some comfort that she liked the shape of it on the map.

The friends of the Baron von Hulst who conducted Sarah to the little town of Lac

du Laiche, Wisconsin, considered her a well-mannered girl. She dropped her little curtsies after the fashion of their own *Fräuleins* in Germany, and she answered them in a reserved and respectful fashion.

The kindly German and his wife waved good-bye to her as she stood, in the twilight, on the platform at Lac du Laiche. Her smart costume of golden-brown velvet, her bright toque of feathers, and her enveloping furs looked out of keeping with the somewhat slovenly surroundings.

Then Sarah turned, to hear a voice cry: —

"Why, I believe you are Sarah, after all! I was looking for some one at least three inches shorter, and not nearly so young-lady-like. But you can't help being tall for your age. It runs in the family. Look at me, only thirty-five years old, and six feet tall in my stockings! Of course you don't need to be told that I'm your Uncle Robert."

Sarah held out her hand.

"How do you do, Uncle Robert? It was kind of you to meet me."

"What did you expect me to do?" he demanded. He was looking down at her through his spectacles with a pair of kind yet shy brown eyes. He wore a hat with an extraordinarily broad brim, and a capacious coat, supplemented by a great cape that draped his slender figure picturesquely. A shabby "hack" was awaiting them, and he led Sarah to it with a light and charming manner, and handed her in quite gallantly.

They were well on their way down the street when Sarah asked, "Ought n't we to leave the trunk checks with some one?"

"Well, I should say we ought!" cried her uncle penitently. "Checks of any kind always embarrass me — I see so few of them." He thrust his head out of the window, and called to the driver, "See here, Bill, I've forgotten my head, as usual! We'd better turn back, had n't we?"

"Well, if you think you need it," replied the driver, quite as if he were Sarah's uncle's best friend. Sarah felt shocked by this unseemly intimacy between the red-faced driver

of the carriage and her uncle. But Mr. Carberry was unconscious of her distress.

"It's really something of importance I've forgotten this time — my niece's trunks."

"Oh, don't you worry about them, sir," said the driver. "I'll get them up to you all right. Ain't I always telling you to leave things to me, sir?"

He was really reproachful, and spoke as if he were the official caretaker of Mr. Carberry.

"I'd have a receiver appointed for myself — if there was anything for him to receive!" sighed Sarah's uncle. His tone sounded weary, and he gave a little cough as he sank back and wrapped his flowing cloak about him.

"The girls will be watching out for you, my dear," he said. "They've been wanting you for years, and so, for that matter, have I."

He leaned forward to look at Sarah's face, and as they passed a street-lamp, she saw tears glistening behind his glasses. She could

not understand why there should be tears in his eyes. All she could think of to say was: —

"Are n't your feet cold, uncle? Mine are, dreadfully."

"What a shame!" he cried, wrapping them up in the blanket. "We're almost home, my dear. There, that 's our house now!"

Sarah peered through the lightly frosted pane, and saw a large white house with dark trees before it, and lights shining from the lower windows.

"Let me help you out, my dear. It's icy on the carriage-block."

He helped her out with a bow, paid the driver, exchanged some parting pleasantries with him, and taking Sarah's arm, struggled against the sharp wind up the icy walk to the house. The front door was thrown open, and Sarah stood among her relatives.

At first she had only a blurred impression of faces young and old; white, brown, and yellow heads at varying heights; and a chorus of salutations. Then an impetuous person no taller than herself flung her arms

about her neck and kissed her. And after that they all kissed her, and she was led into a room where a hickory fire leaped and roared. It was a shabby, friendly, human sort of a room, with corners and comforts for all who made a demand upon it; but to Sarah, accustomed to the elegance of the drawing-room on Riverside Drive, it looked very plain and very poor.

"Get us straight in your mind just as quickly as you can, Sarah," said the lady who she realized was her Aunt Ada. "We're not hard to learn if you apply yourself. First, this is your Grandmother Carberry, your own mother's mother. We call her Grandmother C. for short. And this is my own dear mother, Grandmother Babcock. She's Grandmother B. And this is my father, who is grandfather to everybody. Then the girl with yellow hair is our elder daughter, Fay. I think she's a year older than you. The brown-haired one is Peg, who is, I think, a year younger than you."

Her bright black eyes looked friendly, but

Sarah felt that such eyes might also flash with indignation. Something about the way she stood, the manner in which she was dressed, and the fashion in which her dark hair was woven and plaited made Sarah understand that her aunt was a capable person. Sarah might, in the back of her mind, think herself superior to these relatives among whom she had been thrown, but she realized right there at the beginning that her Aunt Ada never would take that point of view. And strangely enough, that fact made Sarah feel more comfortable. She was only a little girl, for all her courage, her coldness, and her pride, and she needed some one to lean on. The strong, undesired support of her stepmother had been taken from her; but she realized, although with no warming of her hurt and dormant heart, that here was another upon whom she could depend.

Her cousins brought a portable table laden with food.

"We had our supper an hour ago," said her aunt. "And you, no doubt, have eaten on

the train, but we thought a bit of something warm would be welcome."

The family plied her with kindly questions while she ate. Where had she been to school? What had she studied? Did she suppose she would be in the grade with Fay or with Peg? Suddenly she realized that she was expected to go to the public school — she whose tutors had been selected with the greatest care!

"We have such fun at school, Sarah!" cried Peg. "You're sure to like it."

"Shall I?" asked Sarah, lifting her eyebrows. She meant to be discouraging, but Peg did not seem to be discouraged.

Presently Grandmother B. was nodding in her chair, and Grandfather B. was challenging Grandmother C. — who was not sleepy — to a game of cribbage. Mr. Carberry got up and put on his overcoat.

"This is my hour for going to work, Sarah," he explained. "I'm only a poor worm of a newspaper man, who must work while others sleep."

"But not on such a cold night, Uncle Robert!" cried Sarah.

"You see, the subscribers to the paper want to know just how cold it is, and I have to get out the paper to tell them," he answered.

They all trooped to the door with him, and his wife watched him as far as she could see him, shading her eyes from the light of the room. Then she turned back to the others with a sigh.

"Bedtime for all young people," she said cheerily. "Sarah needs a good rest after her long journey."

"O Sarah, you must come and see our room," Fay said.

It was apparently a part of the night's ceremony to kiss all the elders. Sarah saw that it was expected of her, and she went through with it bravely. Even Grandmother B. awoke for the rite. Then the three girls climbed the winding stairway, with its graceful hand-rail and its worn carpet. On the second floor Sarah noticed that doors stood

open into four bedrooms, but the girls entered none of these. They went on up a steep, narrow flight of stairs into a kind of attic, and Sarah saw with something like indignation that three white iron beds stood in a row, awaiting them.

The room was not really cold, but it was far from cozy that night, and the branches of a towering tree lashed against the window. The low wall was broken by dormer windows prettily draped; on the wall were unframed pictures, — pencil sketches and water-colors, — and strips of red carpeting were stretched here and there over the unstained floor.

"You're to sleep in the center bed, Sarah," said Peg, "so that we can have an equal share in you. You look dreadfully tired to-night, so we'll not say another word, but you just wait till morning, and hear how we'll chatter!"

Sarah was used to having Marie help her with her buttons, and she made sorry work of undressing. But she was unwilling to ask either of her cousins to help her, for they

seemed to require no aid. She could have screamed out with irritation, she was so homesick and so miserable. There was only one small kerosene lamp to light the big place, and the corners of the room were full of shadows. She was thinking:—

"The place is n't fit for servants to sleep in!"

These relatives of hers seemed to have no idea of the things to which she was accustomed. If they had only that poor place to offer, at least they might make some excuse.

But instead of making excuses, they called out, "Pleasant dreams!" when they had got into bed.

"You don't mind saying your prayers in bed this once, do you, Sarah?" Peg asked.

Sarah was no hypocrite. "I don't say prayers, Peg," she answered distinctly. She expected a protest. Probably both of her cousins would set on her. But they did nothing of the kind. They merely called, "Goodnight!"

She wondered how the girls could fall

asleep with the tree whipping the window like that. Moreover, there was some one groping about the room! She made out the heavy form of Grandmother C., and presently she felt her fumbling with the bedclothes; then something warm and soft was slipped in at her feet. A few minutes later another dark form crept into the room; it was Grandmother B., carrying a candle that made her silver hair look like a halo round her dreamy, gentle face. As the other grandmother had done, she went from bed to bed, tucking each girl in, and whispering something under her breath. Sarah could not help hearing what she said as she stooped over her.

"God bless you, dear parentless child!" she murmured. "God bless and keep you!"

Sarah lay very still, furious with herself for the sharp little sob that rose in her throat.

II

THE RELATIVES

DURING the forenoon the law of the Carberry house was silence. Sarah was told of that as soon as she awoke the first morning.

"Dad sleeps, you see," Fay explained. "The poor darling works till dawn, and then he sleeps till noon."

"How dismal!" said Sarah. "And I suppose all the family has to go on tiptoe."

"Mercy, yes! Peg and I grew up on tiptoe. But really, we don't mind that. All that we mind is the kind of life dad leads. Here he's gone on years and years, turning his days and nights topsy-turvy, and getting thinner and cleverer and sadder all the time."

"But I did n't think him sad."

"Oh, you mean that he makes jokes! I know. It's a habit — he makes them all the time. But that's because he 's really sad."

Sarah was not accustomed to such talk; she went on silently with her dressing.

"I don't suppose you'll make sense out of half we say, Sarah," said Peg. "Carberry talk is something you have to learn, like French."

"Oh, French is easy enough," Sarah retorted. "*It* has rules."

The sisters laughed merrily, although they kept the sounds of their mirth subdued. Apparently they enjoyed a joke, regardless of whom it was on. Sarah had meant to make a cutting remark, but she saw that the sisters were merely admiring her for her quick retort. It hardly seemed worth while to be ill-natured with people who did not give you credit for your meanness.

The girls were putting on their heavy school frocks, but they told Sarah that the family had decided that she was not to go to school until the beginning of the next week.

"Mother said you'd want a day or so to learn the points of the compass," said Fay.

"The points of the compass!"

"That 's more Carberry talk. Mother meant that you 'd be busy enough for a while in getting used to us and our ways."

Sarah, who was still shivering from her tepid bath in an ugly tin tub, thought that it would take more than a few days to accustom herself to the Carberry way of living.

To her surprise, she found the breakfast-room charming. It was a narrow room, with high, white paneling. A drugget of blue partly covered the floor; and blue and white curtains hung at the low, wide windows. Through them, Sarah could see an orchard in its winter dress, and beyond it an ice-covered lake. The arms of the lake sprawled out like the tentacles of a devilfish. It was on the high embankment of one of these arms that the Carberrys lived.

Grandfather Babcock sat with his back to the blaze, reading the paper and sipping his coffee. The young mistress of the house smiled at the three girls from behind the coffee-urn; the two grandmothers were engaged in argument.

"And a tiny pinch of salt mixed in with the dampened coffee is an excellent thing, I assure you, Mrs. Carberry," said Grandmother B., in her soft voice. "It gives a little tang."

"Pardon me for saying, Mrs. Babcock," Grandmother C. replied, "that although you are an excellent cook in some respects, I think you overseason. Indeed, I think I see the effects of it in the impaired digestions of your family."

"I was not aware, Mrs. Carberry," replied Grandmother B., "that any member of my family is in poor health. My own opinion is that more people have come to grief from existing on flat, uninteresting food, regarded mistakenly as wholesome, than from —"

But at this point Mrs. Robert Carberry discovered an item of unusual interest in the paper that her father had passed over to her.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "Poor old Mrs. Kermott has fallen and broken her hip!"

Instantly the elder ladies forgot their dif-

ference of opinion, and were absorbed in sympathy for their neighbor.

"And she so alone!" sighed Grandmother C.

"We ought to go over at once to see if we can be of service," declared Grandmother B.

"Maria," expostulated Grandfather B., "I don't think you should venture out in this weather."

Grandmother B. turned on him like a ruffled dove. "Melville," she said reprovingly, "have I ever been house-bound? Have I ever let the weather set metes and measures for me?"

Fay and Peg appeared to be entertained by these encounters; their mother's eyes were dancing; and what with the crackling of the fire, and the singing of the canary, and the flashing of the goldfish in their crystal bowl, the room seemed full of movement and cheer.

When breakfast was over, Peg and Fay had duties to perform before they started for school. It was their business to clear the ashes from the sitting-room fireplace, and

to brush the floor and dust the furniture. "We're allowed to be a little lax every morning except Saturday," Fay explained, as she hurried from table to chair with her dust-cloth. "But on Saturdays we are cyclones for cleaning."

Their elders had their duties, too, it seemed. Grandfather Babcock put on a reefer, mittens, and a cap, and went out to clean the walks. The grandmothers had the pets to care for, the mending to do, and their own rooms to tidy. The mistress of the house was making out the list for the grocer, and planning the meals for the day.

Sarah watched these activities with some bewilderment. She thought it beneath the dignity of a man like Mr. Babcock to be out cleaning the walks where all the neighbors could see him. None of the gentlemen in the apartment building on Riverside Drive would have dreamed of conducting themselves in such a manner.

But every one seemed to be taking the morning's tasks as a matter of course, and

she began to wonder whether there were not something she could do. Sarah had a just mind, self-centered though it was. So, after the girls had left for school, she said to her aunt: —

"It seems to be the custom for every one here to do something, Aunt Ada."

"Yes," Mrs. Carberry answered. "We keep only one maid, and we must be careful that she is n't overworked. Besides, these tasks give us exercise and help us pass the time. We are so busy in this house that we don't know what it is to be bored."

"Would n't you prefer to have more servants, Aunt Ada?"

"Why, no, I can't say that I should, Sarah. I love my home better for having a share in the work of caring for it each day. You see, if I had more servants, and your Uncle Robert was paying all of them, he would really be doing all the work. I'm his partner, you know, and I wish to carry half the burden."

"The ladies I knew in New York did n't do any work, aunty."

"Well, the ladies in Lac du Laiche have to do a great deal. It's just another way of living, Sarah. I think ours is a happy way, but I'm sure many who live the other way must be happy, too — happy and good."

Sarah stood in silence a moment. Then she said: —

"Don't you think there are best ways and worst ways of living, Aunt Ada?"

Mrs. Carberry laughed in her gay fashion.

"Oh, I think if the truth were told, almost everybody enjoys his own way of living."

Sarah flushed a little. Then she said, with her own queer, assertive courage: —

"But I don't really believe I shall enjoy your way, Aunt Ada."

"Wait," advised Mrs. Carberry, taking no offense. "It's too soon to make up your mind."

Sarah lifted her stern young eyes to her aunt's face. "But if I'm going to live here and cost you money, I ought to work."

"You're not costing me a cent, Sarah. Mr. Richard Charlton, your stepmother's attor-

ney, is to act with your Uncle Robert as joint guardian, and he has insisted that a certain sum, covering the actual expenses of your living, shall be paid to us. So you are under no obligations to us — none whatever. And if you find that you can't be happy with us, you shall go away to boarding-school."

Sarah looked straight into her aunt's eyes, and received a straight look in return.

"Thank you, Aunt Ada," she said, and dropped one of her little German curtsies.

Half an hour afterward, Mrs. Carberry heard a swishing sound, for which she was unable to account. She put down her sewing, and went to see what it was.

Sarah, clad in one of Fay's all-enveloping aprons, was sweeping down the stairs under the supervision of Ellen, the maid.

"And then, miss," Ellen was saying, "after you're done with the sweeping, you must be after wiping the stairs themselves down with a cloth. The banisters you do with a silk duster, rubbing the rounds most particular, and once in a while you rub the hand-rail

with a bit of oil, and polish it up grand with a flannel."

"Thank you, Ellen," said Sarah. "I think I understand. You may depend on me to do the stairs every morning, and I'd be obliged if you'd bring me the oil right now."

When Mrs. Carberry went upstairs a few minutes before noon to awaken her husband, she said, "Little Sarah's going to come out all right, I think. She's as solemn as a deacon, and as honest as a judge, and she looks on us as well-meaning barbarians, but I can see she's trying to be just to us."

"Poor little thing!" sighed Robert Carberry. "Ada, we must do something to cheer her up."

"Be moderate, my dear. Your methods of 'cheering up' are likely to be too strenuous."

"Nothing of the sort. Leave the child to me. I'll give her something to think about."

At the midday meal, all the talk was of Mrs. Kermott and her broken hip. To Sarah's surprise, Grandmother B., who had

declared that she would go to the bedside of her old friend, decided that, after all, it would be unwise for her to miss her nap. And Grandmother C. agreed that it was a risk not to take one's rest in the middle of the day. Mrs. Robert Carberry was delegated by the grandmothers to visit their neighbor.

"You might come with me, Sarah," she said. "It will give you an airing. We want to get some color into your cheeks."

Sarah rose obediently to make ready; she had decided to be as obliging as possible.

"She does n't want to go," her uncle said, after she had left the room. "She does n't want to do anything, and she does n't like anybody. She makes me think of Brother Will when he was little. Mother here was always trying to rouse his enthusiasm. She used to greet him in the morning with cheering remarks, such as, 'What a lovely day it is for a little boy! See how the sun shines, and hear the dear little birdies sing!' One morning Will tramped into the room with a face like a thundercloud, and when he saw moth-

er's sunny smile, he shouted, 'It ain't a nice world, and the birds sing awful!'"

The electric car passed the house, and had an obliging way of waiting for any one who showed an intention of riding in it. Mrs. Carberry, for example, stood inside her storm porch till she saw the car coming. Then, stepping out, she waved a friendly salutation to the driver, who brought the car to a standstill, and waited while Mrs. Carberry ran back to the hall for a scarf.

Sarah, accustomed to the peremptory ways of New York motor-men, was astonished. But she was still more amazed to find that her aunt knew every one in the car. Sarah primly acknowledged her presentation to her aunt's friends, all of whom said that they hoped she would be happy in Lac du Laiche.

As she and her aunt climbed the hill together, after leaving the car, she heard something about the lady they were going to visit.

"She's a great character, my dear. We call her the Duchess, she's so elegant and imposing, and so dictatorial. She tries to run

the town, and although the people pretend they don't like it, they'd miss her supervision if it were withdrawn. She bought the opera-house that she might induce some good entertainments to come here now and then. She gives the finest parties in this part of the country; and she's interested in politics, and knows a great many distinguished persons. Her husband, Judge Kermott, was an American consul abroad for a number of years, and she got into the way of looking after the interests of other people. She and the judge came back here to live, because this was the place where their first home had been, and because they loved the people, and the quiet, and the lake and the trees. See, here's her house."

They were passing through an archway clipped in a cypress hedge; before them, a terraced garden, snow-laden, lifted itself slope by slope to a spacious old house. The bricks were mellowed to the hue of a faded rose. Six graceful chimneys rose high above the roof, and terminated in fantastic chim-

ney-pots. Seven hooded windows looked from the upper story; and beneath them were ranged corresponding windows, and one beautiful door that opened on a brick terrace, along which winter shrubs were ranged in pots of pale-green earthenware.

"Oh, how pretty!" cried Sarah. "It's like a picture in a story-book! I did n't know there was such a lovely place in the world!"

It was the first burst of enthusiasm that Mrs. Carberry had heard from Sarah. Until that moment she had not realized how the girl's coldness and reserve had affected her.

The two were shown into the long drawing-room. Carved chairs and settees of teakwood, cabinets full of curiosities, and hangings of Indian silk gave a foreign appearance to the apartment. Strange odors pervaded it — odors that made Sarah think of "frankincense and myrrh."

Mrs. Carberry had only a few minutes to wait before she was summoned to Mrs. Kermott's bedroom, which was on the ground

floor, just beyond a little chintz-clothed morning-room.

"Where is that child I saw walking up the path with you, Ada Carberry?" Mrs. Kermott asked.

"In the drawing-room, Mrs. Kermott."

"And who is she, if you please, madam?"

"Robert's niece — Molly's child."

"Molly's child!" Mrs. Kermott exclaimed. "Why don't you bring her to me? Do you suppose I want Molly's child at one end of the house and myself at the other?"

"She would love to come, but I thought you might be suffering."

"I'm not suffering at all, Ada Carberry. Why should I be? It was that inaccurate, sensation-loving sheet that your husband owns and edits that gave me credit for breaking my hip. I slipped on the pavement; I was carried into a drug-store. One of those presuming young reporters from the 'Daily Chronicle' was there. He had the impertinence to ask me who I was. I am glad to say that twenty persons indignantly told him.

He inquired how I felt. I told him that I felt villainously, and that it was a wonder I had n't broken my hip. So he said I *had* broken it. That's news, I suppose. As a matter of fact, I am only horribly shaken. But if I sit perfectly still, I'm tolerably comfortable. Besides, it gives me a chance to exercise self-control. Ada, bring in that child."

Sarah was presented with due ceremony. She saw a large, handsome old lady, clad in a purple velvet tea-gown, with an ermine stole about her neck. Her abundant iron-gray hair was done in puffs, and over rolls. Sarah dropped her a curtsy, and was greeted with: —

"Charming! Charming! Come nearer, child. Do you look like your mother?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Sarah. "I'm so sallow and thin. Mamma had red cheeks and dimples, and every picture I have of her shows her smiling. I'm not a bit like that. I don't believe I like to laugh the way other people do."

She could not tell what it was that made her speak out so freely.

"So you don't like to laugh!" exclaimed Mrs. Kermott. "Well, neither do I, as a mere vocation. Don't you talk much, either?"

"Indeed she does n't," broke in Mrs. Carberry. "She's a great contrast to my girls in that particular."

"Have you any accomplishments? Can you sing?"

"A little. Mamma had me take singing lessons. The teacher said I would have a contralto voice."

"Can you play any musical instrument?"

"I have a harp of my own, and I've had lessons on that."

"Ah, good, good! And did you bring your harp with you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Kermott."

"Do you speak French?"

"Oh, yes. I learned French almost as soon as I did English."

"Excellent! Excellent! That's my idea

of an education for women. Of course Molly Carberry's girl would have talent."

She leaned back in her chair, with a sudden twinge of pain.

"You must let us come again when you are stronger," said Mrs. Carberry. "And here are some goodies that you are to accept from the two mothers."

Mrs. Kermott sat up valiantly.

"Do you mean that you are thinking of leaving my house without bite or sup? That would, indeed, be a fine example to set Miss Brewster. Young lady, be good enough to press that button for Hannah to bring tea."

While they waited for the tea, and after it had been brought, Mrs. Kermott continued to converse in her own manner. Now she talked of what interested Mrs. Carberry; now of what interested Sarah. Between her eyes and Sarah's passed pleasant messages of understanding.

"Thank you for coming to see me, Ada Carberry," she said, at parting, "and for bringing me tokens from my old friends.

Thank you most of all for bringing Molly's girl. You'll find my victoria waiting for you at the door. No, don't thank me. The horses need the exercise. Moreover, I'd like to ask if I may send them for your niece in a day or two? If she will consent to do so, she can lighten my loneliness."

"Oh, thank you!" Sarah cried. "I'd love to come."

Her hostess held out her hand with the manner of a queen — or so Sarah thought.

"You've made a friend of Octavia Kermott, Sarah," said Mrs. Carberry, when they were outdoors.

Sarah lifted a face into which the roses had crept. "Do you know, I believe we *are* going to be friends, Aunt Ada," she said. "Is n't it strange that an old lady like that, so clever and wonderful, should like a little girl like me? And it will be the first friend I ever had. I did n't know any girls in New York, you see. Of course, Fay and Peg are as good to me as they can be. I'm ever so much obliged to them. But they'd be good and

kind to any one who came to live with them, would n't they? And then I'm their cousin. They'd feel that they *had* to like me. But Mrs. Kermott did n't have to like me unless she wanted to, did she? And is n't she — different, Aunt Ada?"

Mrs. Carberry smiled. "Different?" she said. "From everybody else, you mean? Oh, yes, Octavia Kermott is different. You never know what she's going to say or do next."

"I shall like that," Sarah declared. "Back at home I always knew what Marie and mamma were going to do next — except just at the last. Then mamma was rather different, too. She said some things that made me want to die. But after all, that was n't so bad as being there day after day, with the days all alike, and nothing to surprise me."

Mrs. Carberry looked down sympathetically at her niece.

"I quite understand," she said gently. "Well, Sarah, you may have your troubles here, but at least the days will not be all alike.

I think I can safely promise that much to any one who lives in Robert Carberry's house, and has the Duchess for a friend."

"The Duchess?" said Sarah. "Oh, yes, you mean Mrs. Kermott."

III

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

THERE came a red-letter day to the Carberry house — or, to be accurate, a red-letter night. Robert Carberry, editor of the Lac du Laiche "Daily Chronicle," stayed at home for the evening. This he did once a week, when he gave over his duties to his assistant, Mr. Rothaker Kipp, who acted as foreman of the composing-room, assistant city editor, business manager, and general factotum.

On Mr. Carberry's nights at home, Grandmother B. drew on her supply of pickled peaches; Grandmother C. put on her best cap, and chose an article in one of the magazines that she thought the others would enjoy having her read aloud. As the selection was likely to be of an improving character, and as the family seemed to resent studied attempts to improve them, they spent half the evening

struggling against their fate; in the end, they usually surrendered.

The master of the house told his best stories, and the girls and their mother tried to be as entertaining as possible. In her thoughts Sarah had criticized them for being plain in their ways, but she soon saw that they satisfied the tired man who sat among them. Fay wore a pale-blue house frock, and looked even prettier than on the night when Sarah had first seen her shining hair and heard her musical voice. Peg was in a red dress with bands of black.

"They were faded summer dresses," Mrs. Carberry explained, when her husband admired them, "and I dyed them myself. They're pretty, are n't they? I should n't like to be merely frugal, but when I can be frugal and picturesque at the same time, it pleases me."

But after all, it was Sarah's uncle who contributed most to the enjoyment of the evening. Sarah, who had settled herself in a corner of the sofa, away from the fire, in-

tending to keep in the background, since it was so seldom that her uncle's family had him to themselves, overheard him talking about a vinegar factory. That seemed an odd topic of conversation.

"Really," he was saying to his wife, "I think you and the girls would enjoy living in it immensely. It has a low, rakish look, something between an old-fashioned privateer and a new-fashioned bungalow. Now, what could be more democratic than for the hereditary barons of Carberry House to leave their ancient stronghold, which, by the way, is more ancient than strong, and move into this unoccupied vinegar factory? Think of the comment that it would make in our best circles! Think of the opportunity you and the girls, and the grandmothers, too, would have for contriving! First, we should have to decide which end we would have for the kitchen, and which for the drawing-room. Then we would each have a studio. Fay says she needs one, and I don't know but we all do. Grandmother B., who makes a specialty of pickles,

and who puts up the best ones in the State, would feel completely at home in the place. Why, sometimes, when I've eaten her pickled peaches, I've wondered if she was n't the mother-of-vinegar herself! And nowhere would the mother-of-vinegar feel so much at home as in a vinegar factory."

Sarah imagined that her uncle darted a sidelong glance at her. She hoped from the bottom of her heart that he had not seen the expression of dismay that doubtless was on her face. Had she left the Riverside Drive to move into a vinegar factory? What a very, very odd family! Why did not her aunt object? Surely, she had a right. And why did not the grandmothers and Grandfather B. say what they thought about such a ridiculous idea? But every one seemed interested.

"You would n't need to put up partitions at all," Fay said. "You could divide the rooms with screens that we girls would make. I'd make mine of plain canvas or monk's cloth, and decorate them with original designs. Then we'd light the place with Japa-

nese lanterns, except in the kitchen, where, of course, you want a lot of light."

"There's that automobile lamp," said Peg. "We could put that up in the kitchen. It's no use saving it for an automobile any longer."

"Of course," Mr. Carberry remarked, "a careless observer might say that we were perfectly comfortable where we are. But what would he know about the monotony from which we all suffer year after year? I say, get out, move about, adventure! That's my advice to young and old — try a change, make experiments, shake things up! Now, if mother had n't objected, we might all be living to-day in a lighthouse on one of the Florida keys."

"Doing light housekeeping," murmured Fay.

"What would have troubled us then?" asked her father. "Mother could have done the cooking, Grandfather B. could have cleaned the lights and lighted them at the proper hour, the grandmothers could have

chopped the wood, the girls and I could have rowed about and written poetry. It would have been an ideal life. But, unfortunately, mother faltered at the crucial moment."

"Yes," said his wife, "I confess that I preferred the Angora-goat plan."

"Ah, my poor goats!" sighed Mr. Carberry. "How often in my dreams I see them leaping from rock to rock! I say, grandfather, it was your lack of imagination that prevented us from taking to Angora-goat culture. But for you, we might to-day be independently rich in the midst of our blameless Angora goats."

Grandfather Babcock deigned to make no reply beyond a contented chuckle.

"I always thought the pecan plantation the most feasible of your schemes, Robert," said Grandmother Carberry.

Sarah had, of course, long before this made up her mind to take the thing as a family joke; but the serious tone of Grandmother Carberry's voice threw her into confusion. Was the family really as unsettled as that?

Could it be that at any moment they were likely to start on an expedition to some strange place, for the purpose of doing some unheard-of thing?

"Yes," mused her Uncle Robert, "I, too, was fond of that pecan grove. I could see us all sitting on the broad gallery that swept about our Southern mansion —"

The telephone bell rang; the summons was for Mr. Carberry. He soon came back, but the spirit of the evening had flown. The others talked, and the master of the house lay back in his Morris chair, with his dreamy eyes fixed on the leaping hickory fire. He was thinking of something besides what was going on in the room. Sarah could see that plainly enough. Grandmother C. succeeded in getting them to listen to the magazine article on "Birds of Southern California" — a subject in which no one appeared to feel much interest. But the old lady's son, with his tense, white face, and with a manner that had become serious, now that his mood for jesting was over, seemed to love the sound of her

earnest voice. He kept on thinking his own thoughts, it is true, but from time to time he turned an affectionate glance at his mother, as she sat by the fire, stately and severe, determined to deal out to her descendants what she considered good for them. He loved her for the rigor with which she had brought him and his sister and brother through their childhood, and for the courage and pride that underlay the severity, and he prayed that something of the granite of her character might be inherited by the smiling girls who sat, one on each side of him, with their heads against his shoulders and their hands clasping his.

At last, Grandmother C.'s article came to an end. Grandmother B. was roused from a comfortable nap and led away by her husband. Grandmother C. gathered her things and stole away. The girls were ordered to bed, and went, smiling.

When Sarah reached her room, she remembered that she had left her purse in the hall; she went quietly down from her attic cham-

ber to get it, and so chanced upon a scene that surprised her. The room that a few moments before had been given over to sociable idleness was now converted into a workroom. Her uncle, with his glasses over his near-sighted eyes, and with his dark hair pushed back, was writing busily. A pile of papers was heaped before her aunt, who, with a pair of shears in her hand, was evidently looking through the papers with some definite purpose.

"It's a shame for you to have to look through those exchanges for me, my dear," Sarah heard Mr. Carberry say. "But really, I could n't get through them this afternoon at the office. I ought by rights to be at the office this minute. Every time I take an evening off I find some reason for regretting it, but I do so hate to disappoint the girls. And now there's Molly's girl! Why, what time do I have to get acquainted with the child?"

"You must n't give up your one night at home," Mrs. Carberry pleaded. "You're overworked now, dear. And none of us can

live forever. We might as well take a little joy as we go along."

Sarah stole upstairs unnoticed, and as she slipped into bed, she thought of them still working. And when, in what seemed to her the middle of the night, she awoke and saw from her high window a shaft of light streaming out over the snow, she knew that the two were still at their tasks.

From the things she heard and saw it was dawning on her that life was not easy for the Carberrys. In the little apartment on the Riverside Drive, if Sarah's stepmother wanted anything, she had ordered it and written a line or two in her little check-book. But the Carberrys paid as they went; paid with the work of their hands and their brains, paid by going without the things they needed, paid by pretending that they did not want the things they really did want.

The morning after her uncle's evening at home, Sarah said to Fay, while they were dressing, "He was only fooling, of course, — your father. He would n't really take you to

live in a vinegar factory, would he? And he would n't really try to make a living raising Angora goats, or pecans?"

"Sometimes," said Fay, "it's chickens. Now and then it's bees. And once it was buffalo, in Montana. Don't you think it's fun?"

"Fun?" repeated Sarah. "Why, yes, I suppose it is."

"Dad said he was going to give you something to think about," said Peg indiscreetly.

Sarah flushed.

"Was it all to make fun of me?" she demanded.

"Oh, no, no, of course it was n't, dear!" cried Fay. "Peg, how can you be so horrid? Really, Sarah, dad ought to leave this climate. He's only half-joking. He tries and tries to think of some way to go where the winters are n't so long and cold, and where he could care for us all. But of course he's joking, too. That's the way with father. He's a serious joker. Don't you see?"

"But the vinegar factory was right here

in town. There would n't be any use in moving into that," said Sarah.

"That's just habit. We all like to play, you know, — like to pretend. Don't you think it would be a beautiful joke to make an artistic home out of a vinegar factory?"

"I think it would cost a lot more than making a home straight out in the right way," replied Sarah.

"But that would n't be so amusing. Don't you see how people would like to visit you in a vinegar factory? Particularly, if you called it that — put it on your writing-paper, you know, and on your invitation cards?"

"I think you're silly," said Sarah.

"Oh, well, I don't mind. Think so, if you can't help it. Maybe you'll get over it."

"Now what sort of talk is that?" Sarah asked herself, as she ran down the stairs. The breakfast-gong had sounded its musical note, and she was determined not to be late.

At last it came time for Sarah to begin at school. After testing her acquirements, Fay

and Peg had decided that she ought to enter the eighth grade of the grammar school, and they had so reported to Miss Hattie Raymond, the principal. Miss Raymond said that no doubt they were correct, but that she would like to verify their decision. The time that Sarah passed in Miss Raymond's private office was wholly pleasant, and not unlike the hours that she had been used to spending with her tutors. Fay and Peg proved to be right.

The moment when Sarah, straight, proud, and self-conscious, entered the schoolroom and found fifty-two pairs of eyes — not counting those of Miss Templeton, the teacher — turned upon her, was a trying one. A certain sort of scrutiny Sarah could have stood. All the people in a city might have looked at her, so long as their glance was admiring, or merely that of inquisitive equality. But she felt to the core of her being that the pupils of the Lac du Laiche school were regarding her with curiosity, mixed with disapproval.

As Sarah stood there in her smart little frock of blue-and-green check, all laced with little green cords, she represented something with which the other girls were not acquainted. The difference showed in the manner in which she controlled her face, and in the very way she stood, with one hand upon the little green velvet bag by her side, and the other hanging at ease. She was, in a way, mistress of herself, for all her inner anguish, and that puzzled them.

It had seemed to her a piece of bad luck that brought her to this common school. Moreover, it was something of a shock when Miss Templeton said, briskly: —

"We thought we had our quota of pupils, but of course if Miss Raymond says you are to come in here, we shall make a place for you. There are no seats left, but you may take this chair beside the platform. I will have a small table brought in for you to use as a desk. If you prefer not to face the other pupils, you may turn your chair sidewise and face me."

Fay, in her seat in the back of the room, flushed angrily. She wanted to offer her seat to her cousin, and was about to do so when a tall, languid boy rose.

"I'd just as soon take the chair, Miss Templeton," he said, in a pleasant, drawling voice.

"You may retain the seat you have, George Morrow," replied Miss Templeton sharply.

George Morrow remained upon his feet, however. He was smiling at Miss Templeton.

"I'm uncomfortable in this seat," he went on. "The desk is too low; it hits my knees. I'd like ever so much to sit in that chair."

He seemed to insinuate that it would be an honor to be so near the fount of wisdom. Miss Templeton grew scarlet with vexation; but she yielded. Time was precious, although George Morrow never seemed to understand it.

"Very well," she said. "See the janitor and get a table."

"Thank you," said George sweetly.

The school suppressed its giggles. George was the only one who could do anything with "the little pepper-pot," Miss Templeton. Sarah, unused to the peculiar formalities of schoolrooms, ventured to say, "Thank you," first to Miss Templeton, and then to George. She even dropped one of her German curtsies before Miss Templeton's desk.

"Mercy me," thought Fay, "I forgot to tell her not to do that!"

It was the class in physical geography, and Sarah was interested. Miss Templeton's questions and corrections came rapidly.

At last she called on Sarah.

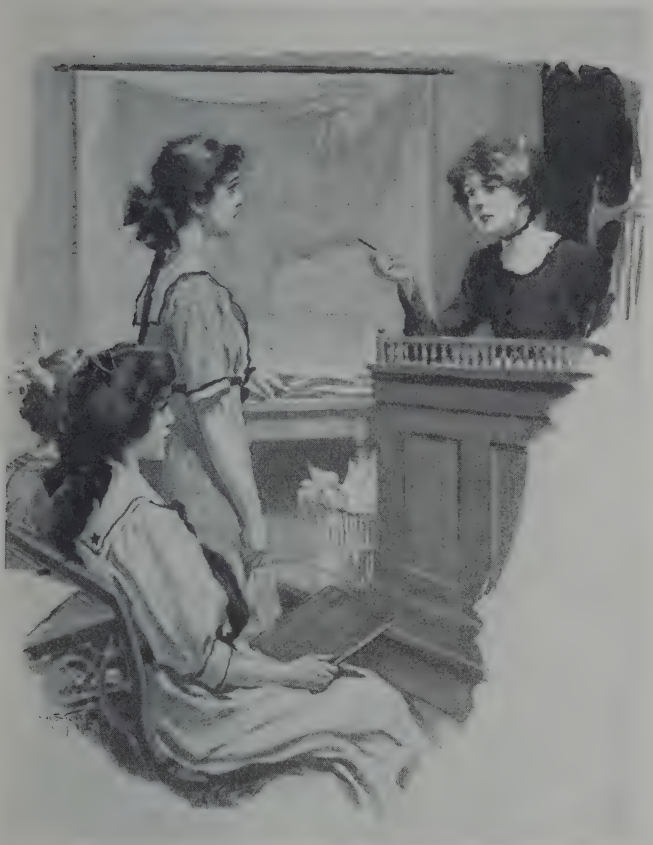
"What is a lake, Sarah Brewster?" she demanded.

"A lake, Miss Templeton," said Sarah, rising, "is a small body of water surrounded entirely by land."

"And what makes you think it is small, Sarah? Do you regard Lake Superior or Lake Michigan as small?"

"No, Miss Templeton."

"It is not necessary to speak my name



"WHAT IS A LAKE, SARAH BREWSTER?"

each time you answer a question — takes too much time. Why, then, did you say it was a small body of water?"

"A lake is small compared with a sea."

"I think if you will consult your atlas you will find our inland lakes more extensive than many a body of water termed a sea. Will you please give me another definition?"

"It is a body of fresh water —"

"Tut, tut, tut! How about Salt Lake? Many lakes are brackish."

"A lake" — Sarah began again, bravely — "is a body of water occupying a declivity made by the action of glaciers —"

"Not necessarily. What about the lakes south of the glacial activity?"

"Or an ancient ocean bed —"

"Everything is an ancient ocean bed."

Sarah drew herself up, and the color, which in another person might have flooded the face, receded from hers. Those many, many eyes were on her; those many, many boys and girls, to whom she was new, who did not yet like her, were listening. She had no idea that

an undercurrent of sympathy was warming their feeling toward her.

"A lake," she resumed, trying to keep the quiver out of her voice, "is a body of water, sometimes large and sometimes small, invariably surrounded by land, sometimes salt and sometimes fresh, having inlets and outlets—"

"I think not," interrupted Miss Templeton, who had been watching her mouse like a playful cat. "I think not. Salt Lake has no outlet. Salt Lake does not flow to the sea."

Sarah did not reply. She steadied herself sufficiently to regard Miss Templeton for a moment. She noticed the light red of her abundant hair; the pale-blue eyes, behind which a twinkle was apparent — the tense, almost quivering personality. It was Sarah's tendency to like an odd and strong personality; and suddenly she liked Miss Templeton. She was used to good teachers, and she saw in this hectoring, darting, stinging woman, a teacher who knew how to stir the sluggish brain. Sarah herself, in all her strangeness and resentment, had felt sluggish herself

since she came West — except for that unforgettable hour with Mrs. Kermott. Now she perceived that this brisk, mandatory young woman was testing her.

She smiled slowly.

"A lake," she said, "is beyond my powers of definition, but if you will kindly define it for me this once, Miss Templeton, I will learn the definition, and repeat it to you to-morrow."

Then she sat down.

Miss Templeton again flushed scarlet, but the twinkle did not wholly leave her eyes. "Beyond my powers of definition!" Susanna Templeton was not accustomed to such phrases from her pupils. She had tossed and torn many a helpless one on the horns of that question, but here was one who had the wit to avoid destruction.

Sarah became aware of a murmur in the schoolroom. She did not bother to seek its meaning. At that moment she did not care. Something good had happened to her. She felt freed from her state of torpor and bewil-

derment, the result of the strangeness of all her new surroundings. After all, she was just herself, Sarah Brewster, with a right to her own thoughts and her own ways. And she was, as she put it to herself, "out in the world." Here were these others all about her, to struggle with, to like or dislike — probably to dislike. Very well, then. Let them do their worst. She was going to live and study, think and talk. And she was going to do it without any pretense, or any effort to be like others. Susanna Templeton, who went through life charged with mental electricity, had "struck fire" from Sarah Brewster.

The rest of the day Sarah worked and recited with all the energy and power that was in her. A new kind of pride began to stir — the pride born of competition. She wished to do well before the others.

On the way home, Fay related the circumstances of the morning to Peg.

"I tell you what," cried Fay, "I was proud of our Eastern cousin! And every one thought she was simply great."

"I thought they were all detesting me," said Sarah.

"Not a bit of it. Of course a newcomer always gets criticized, but now they think you're fine."

It appeared that they really did. Half a dozen girls came hastening up, and two boys, George Morrow, and a jolly-looking boy whom Fay introduced as Sam Davies. They all wanted to know Sarah.

That noon at dinner, for the first time since she had come to Lac du Laiche, Sarah forgot to miss the delicious salads and entrées to which she had been accustomed in New York, and ate the broiled ham and the stewed tomatoes, the raised biscuit and dumpling, as if she had a genuine appetite for them.

IV

THE COURSE OF THINGS

The days began to fly; the weeks took to themselves wings; the months were as nothing, and suddenly it was spring.

Then how beautiful the Carberry place became! Tulips, jonquils, hyacinths, and narcissus sprang up not only in expected places, but in unexpected ones as well, to the surprise of every one except Grandmother Babcock, who knew more about the planting than any one else did. The trees fringed; the lake reflected the sky, and threw back the hillside houses and the kindly groves from its magic mirror.

And the town began to take on new meanings to Sarah. Without realizing it, she was beginning to enjoy the walk to school beneath the unfolding trees, and to love to lie in the attic room and look at the tossing branches of the great locust, or to listen sleepily to the wind calling from the hills.

The spring put new energy into every member of the household. Grandfather B. got at his vegetable garden; his wife worked among her flowers; Mrs. Carberry and Grandmother C. plunged into the cleaning of the old house; and Robert Carberry, observing what his subscribers long had realized, that his type was shamefully battered, decided to buy a new "dress" for the Lac du Laiche "Chronicle." Thereupon, Mr. Rothaker Kipp, master printer and chief of the office, ordered a complete renovation of the place, in order that it might be fit to receive so sacred a thing as a new font of type.

At this time Sarah had a problem. It related to Fay. Fay wanted a studio; she needed a studio if the cause of art was not to be submerged in the Carberry household. And it seemed that there was not even the smallest cubiculum that she could call her own.

"I feel," remarked Sarah to Miss Templeton one day, when she and the redoubtable teacher sat together in a recess, "that I

simply must think out a way to get that girl a studio. Why, she has talent, Miss Templeton."

"Man lived in trees before he did in houses," remarked Miss Templeton, in the decisive, staccato voice that reminded Sarah of a telegraph instrument. "Build a tree-house. Have n't you one of those Ben Davis apple trees in your yard — the kind that bears pretty red apples that taste like old cauliflower? Get Sam Davies and George Morrow to help you build a tree-studio."

Sarah sped away to the boys, and quickly told them of the plan.

"If we can raise the lumber," drawled George Morrow, "we'll do it, won't we, Sam?"

"Yes," said Sam.

That afternoon, as they walked home together from school, the friends talked the idea over. While they were deep in their innocent conspiracy, Mrs. Kermott came along in her comfortable carriage, with the reins in her own capable hands. The young people

ran to the side of the carriage as she brought her horses to a standstill.

"What are you up to?" she demanded.

"Tree-houses," said Sarah. And she told their plans. "We want to draw the designs, but we don't know where to go. We're cleaning house, and everything is upside down."

"Come to my house," said Mrs Kermott. "I don't say that I've any ideas, but I have a drafting-board and drawing-tools."

She crowded the five friends into the seats of her vehicle, and drove them to her house.

"I must order chocolate and cookies," she said, "and then we'll all go to the library and work. Better make the house of that lumber I have behind the barn. I got it for chicken-houses, but when I went to see the chickens I intended to buy, I found the man who owned them had their throats done up in red flannel, and had been up all night feeding them red pepper. That did n't seem to me a pleasant night occupation; so I gave up my idea of raising chickens."

As she talked, she sketched the low-branch-

ing apple tree, with which she had long been familiar. Then she sketched in a three-cornered house, with low casement windows, a northern skylight, a well-secured balcony, and a trapdoor for an entrance.

"The artist must decide on the decoration of the interior," she said.

"Gray burlap for the walls; old-fashioned braided rugs on the floor; monk's cloth at the windows; cushions in old blue and old rose!" cried Fay, without hesitation.

"My carpenter must help with the underpinning and in fastening the house to the tree," said Mrs. Kermott. "We must have neither lives nor masterpieces endangered by the first windstorm. Ah, I'm not in a mood for staying in to-day. Sarah, you come with me into the garden, and leave these youngsters to work out their plan by themselves."

Mrs. Kermott had thrown the train of her purple carriage costume over her arm, and revealed a marvelous flowered petticoat; now she put on her soiled garden gloves, and pinned her old garden hat over her elabor-

ately dressed hair. As she walked ahead of Sarah, she looked so militant that it seemed that every slug and cutworm in the garden must die of fright.

Mrs. Kermott descended several of the terraces, and then, pausing in the midst of the tender spring verdure, looked about her at the opening blossoms with sad and loving eyes.

"My dear," she said, "the best place in the world to say your prayers is in a garden."

Sarah looked up at her, wondering.

"Do you never pray in gardens, Sarah Brewster?"

"I don't pray, Mrs. Kermott. My stepmother did n't believe in prayer."

"Then your stepmother need n't pray. I asked you if you prayed."

"No, Mrs. Kermott. My stepmother said our brains were given us to use —"

"How original of her! And she found, I suppose, that her brains would enable her to answer the important questions! I've never been able to find out anything really worth knowing with my brains, though they're not

so bad as brains go. I've read the great books; I've listened to the great talkers; I've talked with every one I ever met worth talking to. And what have I learned? Nothing, girl, — nothing. Neither the source nor the meaning of life; neither what is to come nor the secret of pain; neither the Power that keeps this rolling earth in its place nor the secret of a blade of grass. But I worship, Sarah. I pray. Not being able to understand is what keeps me humble. Can I not trust the Power that puts the stars in the skies? Shall I not love the Spirit that unfolds these blossoms at my feet? What would your intellectual stepmother with her brain say to all that?"

"Not what you are saying, Mrs. Kermott. She did n't look at things that way."

"I know what's the matter with her," declared Mrs. Kermott, sinking on her knees before a rosebush, and loosening the earth about it with skillful hands. "She has n't tried to pray. She has n't asked; therefore she has not received. God's bounty is await-

ing our ourstretched hands. If you don't believe it, Sarah, put it to the test. Until you are aware of his love, life is lonely at best. And to enter into an understanding of his good-will is like coming out of mist and cold into warm sunlight. And mark this, child! You have only to long sincerely for this joy and privilege, and it is yours."

She rose, and as she stood in the golden sunlight, she seemed at once to breathe in and radiate joy. She picked a tulip and handed it to Sarah.

"Look in its heart," she said softly, "and find God."

Strangely enough, Sarah felt no bewilderment, although what she had been hearing was new to her. She was lifted above all thought of self by the personality of Octavia Kermott. Sarah felt as if she had received the first lesson in some great and beneficent science.

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Kermott, in a changed tone. "It's time for our chocolate. Let us go in."

School closed, and the long vacation began. The trees had leaved magnificently, and Sarah, watching Fay as she worked and dreamed in her tree-studio, took almost as much delight in it as the owner did.

"I was never so happy in my life," Fay said to her one morning, as the two sat in the embowered retreat. Sarah was posing, and Fay was sketching her. "What with a studio and having my weekly lessons in painting! I say, Sarah, would you accept such a big gift as I have accepted in letting Mrs. Kermott pay for my lessons, and for my car fare to Madison, and all?"

"I would n't have taken it from any one else in the world, but I would from her," declared Sarah. "She's got to play fairy godmother in order to be happy. It would have been cruel of you not to accept the offer, I think."

"I hope to goodness that I really have talent. I never doubted it until the other day. Miss Templeton climbed up here to the studio, and I gave her tea. Then she opened

on me. 'What leads you to believe that you have talent?' she asked. I told her I knew I was an artist because I felt like an artist, and she said that that probably was mere youth and health. 'I felt like Shakespeare when I was seventeen,' she said. She warned me that I might be wasting time and money, and that it was my duty to examine myself frequently and see if I was n't as commonplace as she thought I was."

"Is n't she a character!" exclaimed Sarah. "But she can't match Mrs. Kermott. I wish you could see me on my triweekly visits to her house. Mrs. Kermott is waiting for me in her flowing gown. We greet each other ceremoniously. She allows me to kiss her on each cheek. I curtsy, and she sweeps into the drawing-room before me. She inquires for the health of all my relatives; I congratulate her on her appearance. She seats herself at the piano; I perch before my harp. We play things from Mozart. It's no use for me to say I can't read a piece of music. She says, 'Anybody who is not quite half-witted can read a

piece of music after learning the notes. Read and play.' So I do. Then she says, 'Feel!' And I feel. 'Feel more. Weep in your heart. Laugh in your heart. Rage in your heart.' 'But how am I to do that,' I ask — 'with only Mozart?' 'Mozart!' she thunders at me. 'Mozart, the incomparable! You'll never reach his limits. Play!' So on we go. Then the maid comes with something on a tray, and we eat and drink in the frankincense-and-myrrh room."

"Sarah," Fay said, in an odd tone, "we're afraid that you are staying with us just from a sense of duty. You have the money to go to the nicest boarding-school in the country if you wish, but you hang on here with us and go to the town high school. And we've heard that you have given up other things, too. It's none of my business, I suppose, but did n't Mrs. Kermott want to adopt you?"

Sarah blushed. She remembered an hour of sharp temptation. She had been invited to travel with that beloved woman; Rome, Florence, Cairo, Bombay, the desert, the

mountains, the "seven seas" might have been hers if she had consented. The invitation had rung in Sarah's ears like a bugle-call. And yet every instinct had bidden her say, "No."

"Did you want to go very, very much, Sarah?" whispered Fay.

"No, I wanted to stay! I wanted to stay with all you dear people who cured me of being a hateful little prig. And, anyway, I would n't let any one adopt me while mamma is living. She's only my stepmother, and she's on the other side of the world, and it's true we used to bark at each other, but just the same, I would n't adopt another mother."

Fay ran swiftly across the studio to her cousin and threw her arms around her.

"Sarah Brewster," she said, "I know you. I see through you. You're just trying to play fair with us, that's the long and short of it. You're going to stay on here and go to high school with us out of sheer kindness."

Sarah laughed. "Don't try to make me out a model of goodness. It's only that I

don't mean to let you and Peg get all the practical ability there is in the State of Wisconsin. But that's a secret — you must n't tell. I want to learn to write. Mrs. Kermott says that Uncle Robert would have been a charming writer if ill-health and circumstances had not held him down to newspaper work. But I have an idea that I can learn to help him, and that by and by he can take a vacation and do something he really wants to do."

"Do help him, Sarah, if you can!" exclaimed Robert Carberry's daughter. "He's always helping somebody else. I'm afraid I'll never be of much use to him. I'm a flighty sort of canary — not like you, Sarah. Do you know father is off for a few days? He's going to a convention of newspaper men down in Missouri. It will give him a little change. And I always love to have him go, because then it's so wonderful getting him back again."

But before that day, something happened.

On a beautiful Sunday morning Grand-

mother B. put on her gray-checked silk with the Mechlin lace yoke, and a tiny chip bonnet with "spring beauties" beneath the gray chiffon.

"You look too sweet for anything!" cried Peg. "And it's the pride of my life to be seen walking to church with you."

"But you'll not have that privilege this morning," Grandmother B. smilingly replied. "Your grandfather decided at the last moment to stay at home, and I shall go down to the little mission church across the railroad track. I like to go there once in a while to show my interest, but your grandfather is always so annoyed with the sermon that I never like to ask him to go with me."

"But you in all that finery, mother, at the mission church!" exclaimed Mrs. Carberry. "Don't you think that will look vainglorious?"

"I hope not," replied Grandmother B. "There is no time to change. Besides, I'm not sure that it is n't better for me to look as well as I can. I do the mission more honor."

Grandmother B. went off alone, and the others turned their steps along their usual Sunday-morning path. But when they had gone a few blocks, Mrs. Carberry began to be distressed.

"I don't see what possessed me not to have one of you girls go with grandmother."

"I don't, either," said Grandmother C. "Your mother really is ageing, Ada. You ought to see that she is looked after more."

Grandmother C. was marching along with the air of a grenadier.

"It's not too late now, is it? Could n't one of you girls run after her?"

They all were willing, but Sarah put in the strongest plea. "It's not often I get a chance to do anything for Grandmother B., Aunt Ada. The girls know what she wants so much better than I that they always get ahead of me. So let me go this time."

Sarah ran off, and in a few minutes saw the diminutive figure of Grandmother B. making its way along the path that ran beside the road. Mrs. Babcock was walking with some

haste, but when she reached the railroad, she found her way blocked by a long freight train that was standing on the track. Sarah would have gone on to join her, but at that moment her eyes fell on a group of hepaticas blooming in the young grass.

"I may as well be picking these while we are waiting for the train to move," she said to herself.

She slipped through an opening in the fence and gathered the flowers. Then other blossoms lured her farther afield, and beyond these there were yet others. Suddenly she became conscious that many minutes had passed, and that the freight train still stood on the track.

"Grandmother B. must be tired waiting there in the sun," she thought, and she ran back to the road, with the idea of finding a stone or a stump in a shady corner of the fence where Mrs. Babcock could rest.

At the moment when Sarah crept through the hole in the fence, Grandmother B., who had a lifelong aversion to being late at church,

summoned her courage and determined to overcome the obstacle. The train appeared as firmly fixed as the Rock of Gibraltar, and as she was agile in spite of her years, she climbed boldly on the coupling between two cars.

But at that instant the engine gave a sudden lurch and flung her back upon a flat car. Then it lurched again, and rolled her over in her Sunday best. Then it snorted and puffed and lunged. Grandmother B. righted herself, and Sarah saw her get away from the dangerous edge of the flat car. The old lady reached out for the prayer-book that had slipped from her hands; she arranged her bonnet; and meanwhile the long, heavy train got into motion. Sarah called out wildly and ran along beside the track, but Grandmother B. did not see or hear her, and in a moment more the train, gathering speed with every turn of its wheels, had thundered by.

V

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

"WHAT would Aunt Ada do if she were here?" Sarah asked herself desperately, as the train rumbled past her. "Oh, what if Grandmother B. can't hold on — what if she falls off under those dreadful wheels?"

Sarah ran aimlessly along after the train; and then, in the torment of her anxiety, words such as she never had used before came to her lips.

"Oh, keep her from harm," she sobbed, "and tell me what I'm to do! It's no use trying to use my brains the way mamma wanted me to. I have n't any brains. They're all gone. Oh, please, please forget how horrid and silly I've been, and listen to me! If only You will keep little Grandmother B. safe, I'll know You've forgiven me."

Then through her tears she saw the railway station.

"Why, that's it!" she almost shouted. "There's my answer. I must ask the telegraph agent to have them stop the train."

A glow of courage and gratitude swept over her, and she felt suddenly that the mystic powers of goodness were with her. She ran straight into the dingy little telegraph room and poured her story into the ears of the old station master, who looked at her in amazement through his horn glasses.

"What's that?" he cried. "Little old Mis' Babcock off on Number 22, sitting on a flat car? That's the drollest thing I've struck since I got into the railroad business. Come right here and sit down while I see what this ticker of mine will do."

There followed the clicking of the instrument — the wait — the answer.

"We're in time all right!" the operator announced, triumphantly. "I got young Cather on the line at Ostlerville, and he'll flag the freight for us. And now you can stop worrying."

He chatted sociably; in ten or fifteen min-

utes there should be news. Sarah sat on the edge of her chair, quivering with eagerness. When at last the sharp click of the telegraph instrument came, she jumped as if at a pistol shot.

"He's got her," announced the operator. "And she's fit as a fiddle. She will come back on the three-thirty express. Cather says he'll come with her."

"How kind of him! Is he coming just for that?"

"Well, he's capable of it, but as a matter of fact, I suppose he's running down here for a little change. He gets a few hours off now and then, same as the rest of us."

"Thank you ever and ever so much for your kindness!" said Sarah. "I'll have my aunt send you the money we owe you."

She sped on to the house. Grandfather B. was drowsing over his paper. Sarah decided not to disturb him. She sat in the bleak north drawing-room and waited for the family to return from church. When at last they arrived, Sarah told her story in strained

whispers. To her surprise, her Aunt Ada burst into tears.

"Oh, my poor, dear little mother! Such a thing to happen to her! O Mother C., do you suppose it will shatter her?"

"Not a bit, Ada. You little know her if you think so. Your mother is ageing, but, like me, she is of pioneer stock. We pioneers were inured to hardships in a way that it is difficult for the present easy-going generation to imagine. Why, once, I —"

But Mrs. Robert Carberry had left her and gone to the telephone; she was asking "long distance" to give her Ostlerville.

The girls stood beside her, but Grandmother C. swept into the library.

"It's all right," she announced to the drowsing Grandfather B. "We'll know all about her in a minute or two."

"Ah, that will be good," murmured the old gentleman vaguely.

"Good! I should say it would be good! Have n't you succeeded in getting into any sort of communication with her?"

"Communication? No; I can't say that I've had any communication with anybody this morning. I've been alone — quite alone."

"And you mean to tell me, Mr. Babcock, that you made no effort to learn the state of your wife after such an alarming experience?"

Grandfather B. dropped his paper and turned a frightened face toward his old friend.

"My wife!" he said. "What experience?"

Grandmother C. realized her mistake, and too late remembered that Mr. Babcock's heart was weak. She assumed great cheerfulness.

"Only a rather unusual experience, Mr. Babcock. And all's well that ends well, is n't it?"

"My wife — Maria — what has happened?"

"Well, Mr. Babcock," said Grandmother C., "it really is nothing very serious, as it turns out." And then she told him the story.

At the telephone, Mrs. Robert Carberry was talking with Lance Cather, the station agent at Ostlerville.

"Not prostrated at all, you say!" she ex-

claimed. "And not hurt in any way? And — what's that? Going out to dinner? With old friends? You're coming down on the three-thirty and will bring her with you? Thank you very much! We'll be at the station to meet you."

"How like Maria!" said Grandfather B. "To run away on a freight-car at her age, and then to go out to dine in a town she never set foot in before! Now, is n't that like her — and like nobody else?"

At half-past four that afternoon, Ellen McInerney, maid of all work, served tea to a reunited family. Even the master of the house had appeared, a day sooner than he was expected. And with them was a slender, dark stranger, a youth with wistful eyes, Lance Cather, the station agent.

"He came along to where I sat on the top of that train, holding on to myself and saying over and over how funny it was, and how I ought to be amused," explained Grandmother B. "And he lifted his hat quite as if

he were used to finding careless old ladies riding on flat cars. He said to me, 'Is this Mrs. Babcock?' And I said I was ashamed to own it, but I was. And he said it was a pleasure to serve me, and helped me down just as if I were leaving my own automobile."

"And then what happened next, mother?"

"Why, then I went in and made myself at home in the station, and this young gentleman and I were talking about one thing and another, and enjoying ourselves very much, when who should walk in but Richard Dickerson, who came to Wisconsin the same time we did, forty years ago! We were delighted to see each other, and of course he took me right up to his house for dinner. And afterward some of the neighbors came in to see me, and so the time passed delightfully until we started for home."

"Well, we have you back!" sighed her husband happily, and all the family expressed their relief.

"And now I must go to the office," Robert Carberry said.

"May I walk with you?" asked Cather.

"Glad to have you, unless you'd rather stay here with the others longer."

Sarah looked after them as they went down the street together, and the thought came to her that they were not unlike, this young fellow and her uncle. Yet could any one be as kind as Robert Carberry, however graceful and tall and swift of glance he might be? She kept thinking of the youth, so unlike the boys whom she had met in Lac du Laiche, and wondering why he should live in the raw little town of Ostlerville. But for some reason she did not speak of him, even to Fay.

"I don't suppose I'll ever see him again," she said to herself. "And even if I did, I probably should n't like him."

Yet she did see him the very next day. Her aunt sent her to the "Chronicle" office on an errand, and there sat the strange young man.

"Oh, did n't you go back last night?" she asked.

Cather looked at Robert Carberry.

"Go on, boy," said Mr. Carberry reassur-

ingly. "Tell my niece your plan. She's my first lieutenant, you know."

"Why, the truth is," said Lance, "I've about made up my mind to stay on here. There's a man at Ostlerville who wants my job and needs it. He's substituting for me now, and he has a wife and two babies, and the job looks like heaven to him. Anyway, telegraphing was only an experiment with me. The little telegraph instrument sounded mysterious; so I had to find out about it. But now, if Mr. Carberry will let me learn how to be a newspaper man, I'll realize my true ambition."

"I've carefully explained the nature of journalism to him," said Mr. Carberry. "I've told him it's forever running your head against a brick wall, and I have pointed out carefully that it is n't the wall that eventually goes to pieces. I've shown him that writing for the daily press is selling your enthusiasm at so much a line — that it's trying to be an eagle and finding that you're a battered game-cock. It's a business in which

you can make more enemies than in any other business in the world; all the good people disapprove of you, and the bad ones stab you. Your readers won't read your good work, but they'll re-read your bad work; and finally, you'll die a pauper. And then I've frankly said that it's the only profession I care about, and that if I had to quit I'd be heartbroken. So he said he'd take the risk, and I'm going to see how we get on together."

He bowed Sarah out gayly, and only Lance Cather saw how wearily he rested his head on his hand, or heard the cough he tried in vain to suppress. The youth stood looking at him for a moment, guessing at some sorrow in the heart of this man who had offered him so good a chance; and his own experience of disappointment enabled him to understand that here was a man fighting a losing fight.

"Can't I do something for you?" he asked. "You seem very tired."

"It's that correspondence. I must get through it somehow, but no, you can't do it. It would take too long to explain it to you."

"It might take longer to-night, but it won't take longer next week. You let me start right in, please. I'm going to learn the whole business if you'll let me. You see, for the first time I'm where I want to be."

"You're a good way from home, are n't you, Cather?"

"Yes, sir. I'm by myself."

"Do you like it — being by yourself?"

"Sometimes. It makes me feel independent, and there's no one to answer for but myself. I don't have to take the blame of what some other member of my family might do. But sometimes, too —" He hesitated.

"Yes?"

"It — well, I suppose you might say, it frightens me."

"I understand," said Robert Carberry gently. "Well, don't be frightened any more, Lance. Work here with me."

Lance picked up the heavy packages of letters with a hand that trembled.

"Thank you," he said. "Shall we begin?"

Robert Carberry, who knew boys, was conscious of an unspoken avowal of fidelity.

At the end of the summer, Grandfather Babcock's chapter closed. It had been "father's night home," and Grandfather B. had been urged to tell stories of his gallant and adventurous youth. He had seemed happily excited when he said good-night. The family noticed how bright his eyes were, and how red his cheeks. And they were to hold that vision of him ever after, for he died peacefully that night. Grandmother B. withstood the shock bravely.

"I wish you would take me for a drive in the woods, Robert," she said to her son-in-law, "if you can spare the time."

She was thinking of others even then, in the hour of her supreme bereavement. So Robert Carberry, understanding, took her into the heart of the woods, and after her own fashion she found her comfort there.

The little cemetery, which Sarah hitherto had thought so dismal a place, looked friendly and kind the day they carried Melville Bab-

cock, pioneer, to it. The old neighbors were there, lying side by side, united in death as they had been in life. The birds, bent upon their Southern migration, thronged the elms and poplars. There, beneath a bright sky, they left him who had been so adventurous in his youth and so patient in his broken years.

"He earned it," said his son-in-law. "He is entitled to rest."

Rest? It was not rest that Sarah desired, with the blood coursing through her veins, and all the chances and variations of life offering themselves to her. She was thinking rather how death might be overcome. For why should any one wish to die? The words of the service came back to her: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." She said it over and over to herself, and that night lay awake, wondering what sort of an adventure Grandfather B. was having, and if he were hearing the myriad sounds that mortals cannot hear, and seeing the

luminous things that are just beyond the power of human eyes to see.

The family was further thinned during the next month, by the departure of Grandmother C. to visit her son Will in California. The withdrawal of her emphatic personality helped to intensify the quietude that had fallen upon the old house. Even the girls spoke more softly, and were less vivacious. Their new responsibilities at school compelled them to be studious. Peg still went to the grammar school, but Sarah and Fay journeyed to the other side of the town to the new high school, where the teachers addressed them as "Miss Brewster" and "Miss Carberry."

To Fay, painting was still the main interest in life, and the day of the week that counted most with her was Saturday, when she had her painting lesson. But Sarah had found a new joy, and it was her uncle who had helped her to it — the joy of putting down in written words her thoughts and feelings. Moreover, she had as instructor that

woman of original and inspiring methods, Miss Templeton, who also had received a promotion and been put in charge of first-year English at the high school. She permitted Sarah to choose her own subjects, and to treat them in her own way. Miss Templeton's requirements concerned themselves with the essentials of grammatical correctness, of form, sense, lucidity, and taste, but she had no hard-and-fast rules about the methods of treatment. When she talked of literary taste, Sarah instinctively knew what she meant, but she was the only one in the class who did. Sarah made a place for herself, and a reputation, and because she had earned it she let herself enjoy it to the full.

She was helped, no doubt, far more than she realized by her daily associations with Mrs. Kermott and with her Uncle Robert. Their humor and whimsicality, their generous outlook on life, their sincere devotion to literature were sources of constant inspiration to Sarah, and gave her an advantage

over the pupils who had less cultivated friends.

Peg also made her experiments. She went to Madison every week — as her sister did, under Mrs. Kermott's auspices — to attend a class in household economy.

"It will be up to me," she declared, "to support the artistic members of the family. And you just watch me do it, please."

Then, while they all worked and played in contentment of spirit, suddenly the life at the old home came to an end. It came terribly, through fire.

All of them, except Mr. Carberry, who was at the office, and Ellen McInerney, who had gone home that night, were in their beds, sleeping. It was Sarah who awoke. She found herself sitting erect in her bed, with her heart thumping against her side. Then she heard the ominous crackling, and smelled the burning wood. "Fay!" she cried. "Peg! The house is burning!"

The three were on their feet in an instant, clutching each other. There was no moon,

and no lamp, but a sinister glare shone across the lawn.

"Oh, my pictures!" cried Fay. "Help me tear them from the wall! We can save them!"

"Pictures!" exclaimed Peg. "Clothes — snatch up your clothes!"

Sarah had gone into the hall. "Come!" she commanded, in a voice not to be disobeyed. "Come! Who knows what may be happening?"

A frightful apprehension seized them. They sped down the narrow stairs to the second floor. At the foot of them they were bathed in the glare from below, and the crackling had become a roar.

Sarah saw the sisters running for their mother's room, and turned toward Mrs. Babcock's. The air was still comparatively fresh there, and Grandmother B. was not hard to rouse. She seemed bewildered, however, and Sarah had almost to drag her along with her. When Sarah emerged into the hall, she saw Fay and Peg carrying their mother, and realized that her aunt's room, which was imme-

diately over the library, where the fire was raging, must have been filled with smoke. The girls were strong, and they were desperate. No one spoke. The thing was to get their beloved burdens down those heated stairs, to convey them, somehow, past the library door, from which the flames were belching. They all believed that they would be badly scorched. But a little way from the foot, Fay paused.

"Come on, sister!" Peg besought her. "It will be too late. There's nothing to wait for. Come!"

But Fay held back, and rested her mother's inert body for a moment against Peg's shoulder.

"Let's knock over the banisters, Sarah!" she cried. "I know we can!"

They flung themselves against the delicate old mahogany rail, and it crashed to the floor.

"Now we'll jump," said Fay, "and get out the back door."

It was not difficult. They lifted Grandmother B. down, and then the poor uncon-

scious mother. The flames were rapidly spreading, but the smoke was not so bad as it had been. They were choking and gasping, however, when at last they found themselves out on the lawn.

While Fay and Peg worked over their mother, Sarah ran back to the telephone, which was in a passageway leading from the kitchen. She was able to get her message through to the fire station; afterward she snatched some cloaks from the hooks as she ran down the passage.

"Is she better? Is she coming to?" she called, as she ran.

"Yes," Fay answered. "She opened her eyes and looked at us."

The neighbors began to pour out of their houses. Help and sympathy were at hand, and in another moment the fire engine was throbbing in the street. But it was of no use. The seasoned old house, laden from attic to cellar, was doomed. It was consumed voraciously — the library, with its rich store of books and memories, the rooms where the

children were born, the chamber in which their grandfather had died, all the homely comforts and treasured belongings became a scarlet mass of coals.

"Yes," said Robert Carberry, as he and his family sat at dinner the next night at Mrs. Kermott's hospitable table, "I suppose the insurance will enable me to build a compact, convenient house of a sort."

"Of a modern sort," replied Mrs. Kermott. "I've looked into the subject of labor-saving houses, and I can give you advice."

"That's all very well, dear friend," said Mrs. Carberry. "But what about furniture? Must we go into debt for that?"

"Give a party, and let your friends pour a furniture shower on you," suggested Mrs. Kermott.

"And be bound for life to the results?" asked Mr. Carberry, with a momentary return of his old gayety.

"I know!" Sarah broke in eagerly. "I know exactly! I have a houseful of furniture

— beautiful furniture it is, too, — packed away in New York! I'll send for that." She was happy over the idea.

"Thank you, my dear, but I could n't allow—" her uncle was beginning.

Then Sarah broke into the first passionate protest they ever had heard from her:—

"Then I'm not really one of you, after all! I'm 'other than Carberry,' I suppose! You have a terrible trouble and you won't let me help you. If I were in trouble, I'd look to *you* to help me! You don't want me really to have a part in your life!"

"You're overstrained, Sarah," said Grandmother B., in mild reproof. "It's no wonder, after all you went through last night."

"She's not overstrained," declared Mrs. Kermott. "What she says is perfectly sensible and just. And you, who know so well how to give, must also learn to accept."

Robert Carberry rose in his impulsive way, and stooping behind his niece, kissed her forehead.

"I apologize, and with all my heart I ac-

cept. Thank you, dear girl, for throwing in your fortunes with us."

"Fortunes?" said Mrs. Kermott. "It's her heart she's thrown in — her stanch, durable, admirable heart. Sarah Brewster may be your relative; that's a lucky accident. But she's my friend; and that shows my good judgment."

That night, Sarah Brewster, lying in bed, came into the knowledge of a great fact. The past year had brought her a wonderful blessing — the knowledge of her own soul. Yes, she had had a clear, cold little brain, and a just, chilly little heart, the Sarah Brewster of the old Riverside Drive days. But here in this little town that you had to hunt for to find on the map, among these newly known relatives and friends, she had found the secret of happiness. She had come into her own. Sarah Brewster had "found herself," and she could look back with compassion on that lonely, proud, obstinate child who had hated herself when she confronted her sullen image in the mirror.

VI

COMRADES

"SEVENTEEN?" said Sarah Brewster — "seventeen? I suppose I am, but I'm not nearly so old and sensible as I was four years ago. Aunt Ada, dear, when I came here four years ago, was n't I a wonder-child for sobriety, propriety, and — and dubiety?"

"You were a lonely young one," said Mrs. Carberry. "And you gave me a bad heartache. But now I've stopped worrying about you. Have you frosted the cakes, Sarah?"

"They're inch thick with frosting, Aunt Ada."

"Good. I see some more roses have come."

"Two boxes of them."

"From whom?"

"One was from Mrs. Kermott."

"And the other?"

"From — from Lance Cather."

"Ought he to be buying roses, I wonder?"

"I should think not. At least, in calm and temperate moments I should think not."

"And is this one of them?"

"It is not. This is my birthday, and I'm entitled to all the presents I can get."

The tall girl stooped over her aunt, who was arranging the place cards at the supper table, and kissed her.

"Twelve at supper, and thirty at the evening party. I call that something of a birthday celebration. And does n't the house look sweet?"

Mrs. Carberry sighed to herself as she looked about at the picturesque bungalow that they had now occupied for three years and a half. The walls of this house were not lined to the ceiling with books, as those of the old house had been. The comfortable, ugly, familiar old furniture had given place to the beautiful mahogany that was part of Sarah's inheritance. Fay's best water-colors, handsomely framed, hung on the putty-colored walls. It was a trim little house, and attrac-

tive; but Mrs. Carberry had never ceased to miss the genial, rambling old home.

The girls had introduced new ways, some of which did not altogether meet with her approval. They shared a little sitting-room together, and studied there in the evening, but they slept on the covered porch, regardless of what the thermometer might say. They had stood out, too, for a square little dining-room, in which the circular table accommodated the family, and a guest or two; on occasions such as the present, the large living-room was brought into requisition. It struck Mrs. Robert Carberry as being unconventional, although she had to admit that, whereas taking care of the old house had consumed the greater part of her day, she now was really put to it to find enough tasks to keep her busy half the forenoon. There were no lamps to clean, for the house was lighted with electricity. Peg cooked special dishes at the table in the electric chafing-dish, and devised strange and wonderful compounds that put to shame

Ellen McInerney's simpler cookery. Some one was always coming and going now; the telephone was forever ringing; and before the elders could recover from the effects of one entertainment, another was upon them. Now it was charades, now a musicale at which Sarah played her harp, now a luncheon at which Peg prepared all the dishes, now an exhibition of Fay's sketches. And the girls were invited somewhere all the time. So, at least, it seemed to Mrs. Carberry.

It was not that she did not try with a sort of blithe conscientiousness to keep pace with all these activities. But in spite of her comparative relief from domestic duties, the burden of the day was bearing heavily upon her. Robert Carberry was losing ground physically. He knew it, and fought on doggedly. Others saw it, and half from compassion, half from a belief that he would be unable to perform any heavy task, dropped him little by little from the enterprises of Lac du Laiche. He realized the reason, yet he felt wounded; not so much at what his friends did as at

what life itself was doing to him. His wife's consuming thought was to protect him, to care for him, to keep him in love with life.

It was a point of honor with the Carberrys always to rise to an occasion, and Sarah's birthday brought forth cheer from the valuable reserves of gayety with which they kept themselves carefully supplied. Mr. and Mrs. Carberry had suggested that they and Grandmother B. should eat by themselves that evening, and leave the table to the young people. But Sarah vetoed the idea.

"It's my birthday, is n't it?" she said. "Well, then, I should think I might choose my own guests."

So Grandmother B. sat at her right hand, and Mrs. Kermott at her left, — Mrs. Kermott in peachblow satin, with diamonds, — and Sam Davies and George Morrow were placed just beyond those ladies. Next came Peg and Fay, facing each other. Robert Carberry headed the board, "merely and incidentally," Sarah explained, "in the character of *pater familias*." His wife sat beside him to

assist in the serving. "For I'm not going to lift my hand," Sarah declared. Lance Cather sat next to Mrs. Carberry, and opposite them were the Vernons — Mrs. Vernon being none other than Sarah's vivacious teacher and friend, Miss Templeton. To the surprise and satisfaction of the whole community, she had, with her usual decision, married a pleasing middle-aged attorney.

"I was going to have some little plaster doves on my cake," Sarah said to the company, "but when I could n't find any at the shops, I invited the Vernons."

"All that troubles me, Sarah," said her uncle, "is that we're not all so young as we ought to be."

"There are a lot of young, immature things coming for the evening," replied Sarah; "well-selected members of the Dramatic Class, and the Singing Society, and the Pen Club, and the Dependent Foresters — that's our tree-study society. They'll be young enough to suit even you, Uncle Robert."

"He likes us callow," said Lance Cather.

Mrs. Kermott looked appreciatively at this young man. She had liked him from the first, although, as she often said to Sarah, he had come from nowhere. She, who made a great point of knowing the antecedents of her friends, had forgiven him for not having any — or at least for not being talkative about them. Sarah herself knew next to nothing about Lance's past, or his family. He had made his way rapidly on the "Chronicle." Mrs. Kermott was thinking how much happier he looked than in the days when he first had come to Lac du Laiche.

Since it was Sarah's party, it was natural that Lance should look often at her. They all looked at her often. Her dark hair was coiled about her head; her dark skin had grown clear and beautiful. She was not a rosy girl, but her pallor was healthy, and her flexible lips were crimson. That she was tall and graceful did not so much explain the charm that people found in her, as that her movements were direct and to the purpose. There was no wavering about her, no indeci-

sion. She walked, sat, used her hands, turned her head like a girl who held the mastery over herself.

"I think, my dear," Mrs. Kermott had said to her once, "that you are going to be a trifle too straightforward, if you're not careful. I like some mystery about a woman. Now you — you're getting almost too capable and plain-dealing."

"There's Fay," Sarah had answered; "she'll supply you with mystery. I'm growing up the way I was meant to grow. You could n't expect an oak to turn into an elm, could you? Please take me as I am."

And as she was, she was a leader. When the young people pushed back the rugs of the living-room and banished the tables, and the games began, Sarah was queen of the party, and she would have been queen even if they had not all made her so, in loving admiration and in recognition of the day. She was to choose her partner in some rollicking game, and she came laughingly to her Uncle Robert, with her slender arms outstretched, and with

the folds of her white frock drifting about her.

Robert Carberry still had the heart of youth, and as the game progressed, no one looked more winning than he. Yet he could not romp long. His teasing cough caught him, and warned him to stop.

"Anyway," he gasped, "I must go to the office now, dear! I don't want Lance to leave, and one of us must go. I'll slip away before he sees me, or he'll insist on going in my place. He's worked very hard, and it does me good to see him having a good time."

He was off, laughing still, in spite of his quick-drawn breath.

"He has just strength enough for work, poor dear," thought Sarah, "and not enough for play. How he would have loved play, and what could he not have got out of travel! Yet here he is tied down to duty — although he's never for a moment so stupid as to call it duty. He does n't know duty from pleasure, because it's always a pleasure to him to do the most generous thing in the world."

Lance Cather came seeking her.

"My turn, now," he said. "Come!"

It sounded different to Sarah from other invitations — there was something in it more personal, more confident. "Come," he had said, and he seemed to be asking her to come into contentment, into understanding friendship, into a relationship that would make them help and defend each other. A little mist gathered in Sarah's eyes.

"Yes," she said gravely, "our turn."

They faced their waiting friends smilingly, happy to know that the night was young, that their friends were about them, and that understanding was in their hearts.

Then Sam Davies came up. "The telephone, Lance. You're wanted. I'll take your place with Sarah."

Lance went away, murmuring his apologies.

"Such a chance for me!" said Sam.

"You know I'm only an untoward accident," Sarah retorted.

"Very well, then. Give first aid to the injured."

As they scampered through the brisk game, Sarah was wondering whether, after all, Lance had been called to the office. It was a miserable business, she decided, this newspaper business, which never gave any one liberty. She knew that it was the first party Lance had been to that year. Why could n't he be permitted to enjoy it? But she kept on chatting and laughing, as if these vexing thoughts were not lying at the back of her mind. She was laughing still, as she sat for a moment among the other girls when the game was over, and watched Lance making his way across the room to say good-night to her. She knew he was going to say good-night. His manner showed that. And it showed something else — something that she could not name.

"What's the matter, Lance?" one of the boys asked.

"Business," he answered. But from the way he spoke, Sarah knew that it was not ordinary business that was calling him away.

She moved with him toward the door.

"Must you really go, Lance?" she asked.

"Go!" he answered, with a look. "Of course I must go! I might have known from the first. But it's been beautiful, and I'm glad — even if it has to end this way."

"But, Lance, you speak as if this were the last party in the world."

"Maybe it is, for me. Good-bye, and thank you!"

Twenty minutes later, Sarah slipped away from her friends and went to the telephone. Her Uncle Robert's business voice came ringing back to her.

"Is Lance there, uncle? Did you send for him?"

"No. Why?"

"He had to leave suddenly. There was something the matter."

"So!" said her uncle gravely. "I was afraid there would be. Go back and be a good hostess, Sarah. I'll talk with you later."

The guests were gone; the family, all except Sarah, who, wrapped in her warm white coat

before the fire, sat waiting for her uncle, were in their comfortable beds.

Sarah was frank with herself in admitting that if any very serious trouble came to Lance, it would, in a sense, be her trouble, too. From the first there had been some kind of shadow that followed him, and threatened to cast darkness across his path. At least, so it seemed to her as she sat there, weary from the day's festivities, with the candles guttering on the shelf above her, and only the disordered room to remind her of the gayety that had been.

Some time after two o'clock, her uncle's key turned in the door.

"So you're waiting up?" he said. "Why did n't you go to bed, like a sensible girl? There are few things in the world that won't keep till morning to talk over."

"At seventeen?" she asked, smiling.

He dropped into the armchair and turned his kind and weary eyes on her.

"It's his father," he said. "He came in this afternoon when I was there alone. I

recognized him at once from his resemblance to Lance. But it's a resemblance with a difference, I can tell you. I have seldom seen a more abject, broken specimen of humanity. He has a gentleman's tricks about him — he's quite elaborate and punctilious in his manner. But he's a ruin, a human ruin. And the worst of him is, he'll topple and fall and crush somebody under him if we don't watch out."

"Oh, is n't it a shame! Just think how well Lance has been getting on here, with you helping him, and everybody liking him —"

"Well, now," broke in her uncle, "I was n't aware that everybody liked him. Of course *some* may."

"Some do," said Sarah. "Don't get it in your head that I'm a sentimental ninny, Uncle Robert. I don't think Lance is the only person in the world. Not a bit of it. But we are friends, and I could n't bear it to see something come to him now that would undo all he's done."

Robert Carberry rested his slender hand

lightly on his niece's head as she sat by him on a low hassock.

"I could n't bear it myself," he said heartily. "Here he's come out into a new part of the world, leaving sorrow and shame behind him. He's cut himself loose from some heavy inheritance, or he's tried to. He's told us nothing about himself. He's let us take him for what he is. And now along comes this miserable wreck of a man to drag him down. But he shan't do it if I've anything to say about it."

"What a dear you are! Did you see Lance to-night after he met his father?"

"Yes. I had n't known what to do when the man came up to the office. If I'd been the editor of a great city newspaper, I'd have made Lance a foreign correspondent on the spot, and got him out of town before his father saw him. But as it was, I simply told him I did n't know where Cather was. It seems that, after making further inquiries, he learned that Lance was here at the house; so he telephoned to him that he was going round

to the office, and that he wanted to meet him there. He arrived a few minutes before Lance did, and he was drunk. When Lance came, the man began to weep in a maudlin way; and Lance had to have my help in order to get him to his rooms. Then the boy broke down and cried."

"Oh, I can't bear to hear about it! What are we to do about this dreadful old man?"

"He is n't really old. And I'm not sure he's dreadful. Pathetic he certainly is. He's lost his self-respect. Lance told me that he had never had any influence over his father — no one has had since Lance's mother died. Mr. Cather had money enough to live on, and finally Lance came away to work out his own salvation. Now his father has gone through all his property, and he is penniless."

Sarah tiptoed into the little sitting-room that she and her cousins shared together, and sat down at her desk with a complete and overwhelming feeling of discouragement. Perhaps fatigue played a larger part in it than she realized; but it seemed to her for the first

time as if the brave book of deeds that she and her cousins and their friends meant to write together, were in danger of defacement. Yes, for the first time since she had come to Lac du Laiche, things seemed to be going wrong — to be off the track and bent on catastrophe.

A little blue-bound book that Mrs. Kermott had given her lay on the desk, and she turned the pages mechanically. Then her eyes fell on these words: —

"The best teachers are the aged. They are before us in the march of man; they have more or less solved the irking problem; they have battled through the equinox of life; in good and evil they have held their course; and now, without open shame, they near the crown and harbor. It may be that we have struck one of fortune's darts; we can scarce be civil, so cruelly is our spirit tossed. Yet, long before we were so much as thought upon, the like calamity befell the old man or woman that now, with pleasant humor, rallies us upon our inattention, sitting composed in

the holy evening of man's life, in the clear shining after rain."

Sarah read this twice, slowly and almost wonderingly. Then she copied it in her rather bold handwriting, and wrote beneath it: —

Why not go see Mrs. Kermott, Lance?
Always your friend,
SARAH.

She posted the note before she went to bed.

VII

GRASPING A THISTLE

On the sofa in his outer room, where he had thrown himself, Lance Cather lay awake. Several times he went in and looked at his father, and at the sight of that face, altered and debased though it was, old affection stirred in him.

"I ought to have stood by him," Lance said to himself. "Perhaps if I had, he would n't have got so low as this."

And then he fell to thinking what it would mean to have his father stay with him in Lac du Laiche. Robert Carberry would remain stanch, but how about his other friends?

He would not let himself confess that what he dreaded most was the loss of Sarah's confidence and friendship. Why had he not told her long before of this heavy secret of his life?

Morning came; his father slept on, as if completely spent, and Lance, commanding

his wandering wits, set himself to write letters.

The postman brought him Sarah's note, and Lance was flooded with gratitude for her thought of him. He was not alone, then, after all, — she had not cast him, unheard, into the darkness of disapproval. Her suggestion appealed to him; and he went at once to the telephone.

Yes, Mrs. Kermott was at home. Would he lunch with her? He must be at the office at one? Very well; luncheon at twelve, then.

But what would his father do meanwhile? He still slept. Lance looked at him with pity and awakening tenderness; he seated himself at his desk and wrote: —

DEAR FATHER: I have gone to see a friend about what you and I are to do. Will you not stay in my rooms until I return?

Your loving son, LANCE.

He placed the note on the table by his father's bed, and went quietly out of the room.

Mrs. Kermott, waiting for Lance in her drawing-room, held out a welcoming hand.

"Robert Carberry has just been to see me," she said, "and has told me everything, so there's no need of explanations on your part, dear boy. You need n't tell me that you want to be true to your father, for I know you do. Now we must try to straighten things out."

Three quarters of an hour later, Mr. Le Grand Cather dragged himself from his bed to answer the telephone.

"This is Mrs. Kermott, Mr. Cather. I have just heard from your son that you are here, and I want you to dine with me to-night. It will be quite informal. Please don't refuse me."

Bewildered, yet flattered, Lance's father accepted the invitation. He turned, and saw Lance's note. As he read it, an emotion long foreign to him shook him to his soul. He wept, and then sat down, with an almost childlike penitence, to await his son's return.

For months Sarah had been in the habit

of dining with Mrs. Kermott each Saturday night, and of staying over to go to church with her on Sunday morning. Mrs. Kermott saw no reason for altering this custom.

"I believe in grasping a thistle, Sarah," she said. "Once we have seen Lance's father, the worst, in one way, will be over."

That night at dinner Mrs. Kermott's table was set as for an honored guest. She herself rustled in her Persian silk; Sarah was attired in her silk of old-rose hue, and wore her little necklace of opals — Mrs. Kermott's gift.

In the shamed soul of Le Grand Cather there stole up the flame of self-respect. He found himself well-served, courteously listened to; after having been for three years little more than a wandering vagabond, he was once more a gentleman! It seemed like some beautiful dream that he should be sitting there in that fine old room, with this gracious gentlewoman, and with these two rather grave but admirable young persons.

And that was his son — that tall, efficient youth, with serious eyes.

A question of his hostess roused him from his amazed reflections.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Kermott? Oh, yes, we Cathers are natural agriculturists. Born and bred to it. We made a mistake when we took up other modes of earning our living. You were asking if I had ever had any experience with Florida land. Why, yes, my first independent venture was down there, when I was little more than a boy."

"I have a hundred and sixty acres of unimproved Florida land," said Mrs. Kermott. "I want some one whom I can trust to clear and cultivate it. My idea is to have the timber sawed up for market, and to have the place set out in fruit trees. I wonder — would you be willing to undertake it?"

Lance, unprepared for any such offer, could hardly refrain from protest. His father glanced at him, and read his distrust.

"Would you venture?" the man asked at last. "If I could — could have the chance —"

"Oh, yes, I'd trust you to do the thing well, Mr. Cather. Make your proposal as to

terms after thinking it over. I would be glad to have you do the work at once."

"Have n't I heard you say there was a house on the place, Mrs. Kermott?" asked Sarah.

"Yes; a comfortable little furnished house. But you will have to select your own help, Mr. Cather. There is no one on the place at present. Your authority will be absolute, until we all come down to disturb you. We may do that within a year. Sarah says that when I have a whim to travel I shan't go alone, and in another month she will be free from high school."

Lance saw a look of returning confidence and courage in his father's eyes.

"I dare say I shall require you to be rather a voluminous correspondent," Mrs. Kermott continued. "You must tell me everything about the place. The blood of pioneers is in me. I'd rather make the wilderness bloom than do anything else in the world."

Out of his ashes of humiliation, Le Grand Cather lifted his head and looked about

him. And then he saw leap into the sad eyes of his son an appeal. Was it suddenly something more? Was it belief—trust? And that strange, dark, friendly girl was smiling at him.

"Dear me," she was saying, "to think of being able to work a transformation like that — to make a wilderness into a garden! That must be a beautiful thing to do!"

"Yes," the man replied, with ill-concealed emotion, "transformations may be beautiful, as you say. Sometimes they're like miracles. I'd like to try my hand at this one."

"When?" asked Mrs. Kermott. She seemed to press that point.

"Day after to-morrow, perhaps. My son and I will have had time to talk things over. I infer that you are in some haste?"

"I'm always impatient to carry out a plan once I've made it," Mrs. Kermott explained.

Later, a message came from the "Chronicle" office that Lance need not report for work while his father was in town,

Sarah, watching from the window as the two men made their way down the terrace together, saw Lance draw his father's hand through his own arm with a movement that had something more than pity in it.

"Is there really hope?" she asked.

"Hope?" said Mrs. Kermott. "Well, anyway, we're all happy to-night; and that poor, faltering man likes himself a little for the first time probably in years."

Sarah had taken to writing poetry.

"And I don't think it does you a bit of harm," her Uncle Robert assured her. "You write about precisely the same things I wrote about at your age. I know all about the 'Night throbbing with the sorrow in my heart.' That's the way you write before you know anything about trouble. When you have a rap on the head every time you come above water, you grow mighty cheerful."

Sarah was looking over the book in which she had written her lines. She could not help admiring some remarks she had made — in

SARAH SAW LANCE DRAW HIS FATHER'S HAND
THROUGH HIS OWN ARM

rhyme and rhythm, of course—on the hermit thrush. The fact that she had never heard a hermit thrush did not dampen her personal enthusiasm, although it seemed to have discredited the verses in her uncle's estimation.

"Have you been having 'raps' lately, uncle?" she asked.

"Indeed, I have, Sarah. The only investment I ever made has gone to smash. It was in a copper mine. All over. Dead and buried. Might as well have been an Angora goat scheme or a pecan grove. I'm so thankful none of your money was placed in it. By the way, you've been living an economical life these last few years, and your nest-egg has been growing prodigiously. If this keeps on, we'll be able to refer to you as the heiress."

"Well, now, uncle, about that money. Shall I use some of it for college? Shall I go to college at all?"

"Go to college? Why, I never so much as thought of anything else for you."

"Mrs. Kermott does not wish me to go."

"She has old-fashioned ideas. She would

like to have you and your cousins living in a moated grange, working on tapestry, or flying to the ramparts to watch your knights riding home from the wars."

"But ought all women to go to college?"

"Only a very small percentage ever have the chance. But I should say that a person like you, with a clear mind and perfect health, would get a great deal out of the experience."

"Well, I don't want to be turned aside from life, you know. I don't want to keep my nose in a book of Greek poetry when I might be really living in some wonderful way myself. I'd like to go abroad with Mrs. Kermott. I'd like to travel and think."

"And write the results in your notebook?"

"Yes. Although I may not write any more poetry."

"You've done about all in that line that there is to do, I suppose."

Sarah pinched his arm by way of punishment.

"Don't do something you'll regret, Sarah. Don't give up your college course and then

spend the rest of your life reproaching me because I did n't compel you to take it. That's really the worst about not going to college. People worry about it so. Still, it's a convenient excuse for failure. I've known any number of men who never would have amounted to much, but who are always comfortably able to place the blame for it. 'If I'd only been to college,' they say, 'I'd have been able to do something.'"

"I'm not giving up any chances, uncle dear. I'm too selfish. What I want to know is, How and where can I have the best chances? When fall comes, Fay will go to the Art Institute in Chicago. The next year Peg will take a course in kindergartening at Madison. They have chosen their specialties. Now, I'm going to make a writer out of myself if I can, as you know."

"And don't you think you'd have a great deal more to say, and would understand much better how to say it, after four years at college?"

"That would depend," Sarah said gravely,

"on the kind of teachers I had, and the courses I took, and the people I knew, as much as on my own efforts. But I don't suppose going to college need hurt me if I'm careful."

"Careful!"

"Not to let my originality disappear, I mean. It would be fatal if I were to become all choked up with classical ideas, and forget to write in my own way about the things I know about."

"Hermit thrushes, for example."

"Try to forget about the hermit thrushes, uncle. As you say, we all write about them sooner or later. No, I want to learn to write naturally and spontaneously, and I wish very, very much to say something that people will like to read about. I can feel it growing and growing in me — this feeling that I must write. Whatever is the best thing for the development of that is the thing I wish to do. A year abroad could n't be a mistake, could it? After that I can make up my mind about college."

"It could n't be a mistake. You can afford to take your time, Sarah, but of course I am particularly desirous to have my own girls fit themselves to earn their own living as soon as possible, so that if — if things don't go right —"

"Do you mean that you're not feeling well?" Sarah asked, in alarm.

"None too well, but don't worry about it. I'm nearly worn out trying to cheer up the people who fret about me."

"I won't say a thing to a soul," Sarah assured him, "but I give you warning that as soon as school is over, and I have my high-school diploma safe in my desk, I'm coming down to the office every day to help you. You can go driving every day with Aunt Ada, or perhaps take a vacation, even."

Mr. Carberry smiled tolerantly at his young niece. "I hope nothing of the sort will be necessary," he said.

Sarah flushed hot, with the realization that he did not think her capable of practical service.

Commencement day passed happily, as commencement days have a way of doing. Sarah and Fay, George Morrow and Sam Davies were among the twenty who were given their diplomas. Robert Carberry had been asked to give the address of the day; and he talked in his characteristic manner, half-jestingly, yet with the sympathy that enabled him to get at the essence of things. "Selecting a Vocation" was his theme.

"Don't take the first job destiny offers to you," he advised the graduating class. "There is something each one of you really wants to do, and the chances are ten to one that that's the thing you really will do well. Of course, I don't mean that you are to sit round waiting for some glorious prospect to unfold before your eyes. I mean, get out and look for the thing you want. Try to make life come your way. If you do have to accept something uncongenial to you, something that seems poor and dull, put the life and the charm into it. Give it a new turn, somehow. Compel your personality and your

individual force to make itself felt wherever you are. I believe it can be done even under what seem to be the most discouraging circumstances.

"I wish all of you were to have four years more of study and pleasure before you take up the burdens of life; but my wishes will not alter the facts, and I know that most of the members of this class close this afternoon the interesting chapter of their school experience. From now on they must meet life face to face. You will find life a great instructor. I suggest only two things, energy and modesty, — that is to say, force and restraint. You are, and must always remain, in the midst of lessons. Learn them, rejoice in them; if you are shoved to the foot of the class temporarily, push up again. Be brave, be gay, be faithful, and be interesting. The world's too drab. Put beautiful color into it by your gallantry and your honorableness, by your wit and your zest. No matter how heavy the burden, do not let your feet lag. Keep your troubles to yourselves, and give

of your heartiness to others. So shall you make the good fight. So shall life keep for you till the last the face of youth."

But that very night, he who had spoken so bravely felt creeping over him a lassitude so profound that at moments he believed he was letting go his hold of life completely. Yet he called no one. It had been a busy day for all the members of his dear family. He let them sleep, and lay wondering vaguely what would come to them if, as he feared, he could not go on playing a man's part.

His wife, white-faced, brought the news to the breakfast table.

"He seems utterly done for," she said. "Somehow the address he made yesterday was the last straw. The room was so hot and crowded, and he gave of himself so earnestly. He's always been like that, giving of himself for others. And now he's really prostrated."

"We must call the doctor at once," said Sarah.

"Yes, call him," her aunt said. "I've

called him so many times, Sarah. But we do need him to convince your uncle that at last he must have a rest and a change."

Oddly enough, Robert Carberry offered no opposition. He showed, indeed, an alarming indifference to what they planned for him. It was decided that he was to go with his wife to a quiet place in the pine woods far to the north.

"How are we to afford it?" Mrs. Carberry had inquired.

"I know very well how you can afford it," said Sarah. "I have telegraphed to my guardian, and I have his permission to give you all you need. Don't even discuss it, Aunt Ada, if you love me. What is that money to me, compared with uncle's health! I can't stand it if you don't see what I mean — if you don't understand that I *have* to do this."

"But what will become of the paper?"

"Whatever you do, aunty, don't worry about the paper. Mr. Kipp will attend to the practical details, and as for the rest —"

But just then her husband's weary voice summoned Mrs. Carberry, and she, forgetting that there were such things as newspapers in the world, ran to him.

The next day the three girls saw the two persons whose care had so wrapped and guarded them take the northbound train. Robert Carberry bade them good-bye with a wistful quietness. Something warned him not to let any emotion have sway over him. He seemed to be holding to life with a faltering grasp. But his wife had courage for him then.

"She's going to bring him out all right," Sarah said to the weeping girls, as they came away from the station together.

"Of course she is," broke in Bill Cummings, the cabman who had brought the family down, and who had helped Robert Carberry into the coach with his own friendly and capable hands. "He's going to come out all right. He's run down, and he's got to be wound up again."

Sarah looked at him with swimming eyes.

She remembered how offended she had been at his familiarities that first day when she had come to Lac du Laiche. Now his homely face looked very good to her. She got into his shabby old carriage, and the girls followed her.

Then she looked questioningly at her cousins.

"I suppose we might as well begin right now," she said.

They nodded.

Sarah put her head out of the carriage window. "Bill," she said, "please drive us to the 'Chronicle' office."

"All right," Bill responded.

When the three descended energetically from his vehicle, he said, "What may you be up to?"

Peg threw him a bright glance. "Bill, we're going to run the 'Chronicle.' That's all."

VIII

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

At the threshold of the "Chronicle" office the three girls met with a mentor.

"Miss Templeton!" whispered Peg.

She was Mrs. Vernon now, to be sure, but "Miss Templeton" had become something more than a mere name among public-school students in Lac du Laiche. It amounted to a title. Now, no guardian of royalty had a keener nose for conspiracy than this veteran guide to the youthful mind. She had ceased to teach, and the three young persons before her had long since passed beyond her jurisdiction, yet they trembled in spite of themselves when she arrested them with the exclamation:—

"Girls!"

"Yes, Miss Templeton," they replied.

"You are up to something," she declared. "Your father and mother are n't out of

the county yet, and you're up to something."

"We're not up to anything that's wrong," protested Peg.

"Wrong! If you can tell right from wrong with perfect certainty, you can do better than most people. Nobody in this town is doing anything wrong, so far as I know. It's because we're all of us so violently conscientious all the time that we find it so hard to get along with each other. What I'm afraid of when I see young persons like you, with that dangerous light of purpose in your eyes, is that you'll do something that's not fitting."

"Well, what's fitting is a matter of taste to some extent, too, is n't it, you anxious dear?" asked Sarah, in her most ingratiating manner. "Now, you must n't worry about us, really."

And thinking it better to terminate the conversation, she led the way up the stairs.

"There might be something in what she says," whispered Fay, whose heart really

was somewhere else than in the newspaper office. "Do you think we'll really be doing something improper?"

"Improper!" repeated Sarah, stopping at the head of the stairs and addressing her nervous audience of two. "If we were your father's sons, everybody would think we were doing just right to come down here and help while your dad was ill. They'd all be saying, 'Those young Carberrys will swing things; they've the right stuff in them.' But just because we're girls, you think — at least you think that other people think — that we ought to hesitate. We can't help it if people are wrapped up in antique swathings of musty tradition."

"Merciful goodness," said a voice from within one of the small glass compartments at the end of the room, "who is swathed in antique something-or-other of some kind of tradition?"

Lance Cather appeared in the doorway.

"Anybody is who says that it is n't fitting for us to go to work on the 'Chronicle,'"

said Sarah. "We've come down to help out, Lance. The girls are only offering themselves for temporary work, but I wish to learn the business."

Lance threw back his head and laughed, and Rothaker Kipp, wiping his inky arms on his apron, appeared.

"Our new staff of reporters!" cried Lance. "What do you think of them, Kipp?"

Rothaker Kipp was looked upon by most persons as a fire-breathing dragon, but Fay and Peg did not share this opinion. He had carried them "pickaback" as babies, and had watched them grow to young ladyhood with almost as much pride as if they were his own. Everything they did appeared to him "smart," and he took their present announcement as a new and superior sort of jest.

"Yes," said Fay, "we've come down to help with the paper. We realize that Lance and that Ferguson boy will have a great deal more than they can do properly, so we thought we'd better help out. Have n't I heard you

say, Mr. Kipp, that a little new blood was a good thing for a paper?"

"Well, of course it can be a little *too* new, miss," replied Kipp.

"Well, it has to be new before it can be old," said Sarah. "Lance, there were twenty of us in the class that was just graduated from high school, and all but five will set about earning their livings right away. Now, we were n't the dullest in the class — if we do say it. Here's a need for us, with uncle ill, and all. So why should n't we try ourselves out?"

"I don't think Mr. Carberry would like it at all," Lance said, in a changed voice. "And I'm sure I, personally, don't like the idea. The nicest girls in town running round among business men and all sorts of people, gathering news items! I don't see what 's come over you, Sarah. It is n't necessary for you to work, is it?"

"Not if you mean by that that I am penniless!" Sarah retorted, holding, however, a guard over her temper. "I want to work

because I've the ability to work. What's the use in wasting my energy? It's thought shameful of a young man to loaf round, doing little diddling jobs about the house, when he's had a good education and is in perfect health. My own idea is that it's just as shameful for a girl to fool away her time when she's capable of doing good work. I've meant for years to help Uncle Robert. It seems to me that the time has come when I can do so. I know you need more reporters. I'm no more inexperienced than Harold Ferguson was when he was taken on three months ago."

Fay and Peg seemed to drop into the background. Their hearts were not really in the matter. Fay was to go to Madison the next day for her painting lesson, and everything in the world — except, perhaps, her family — always seemed subsidiary to painting. Peg wished to try her hand at housekeeping, and was already saying to herself that she was not prepared to make herself disagreeable to Mr. Kipp and to Lance.

"Oh, well," said Lance, not wishing to come to a conflict with Sarah there before the others, "as a midsummer lark, of course, I suppose there's no strong objection to it."

Sarah looked at him. "The whole truth of the matter is, Lance Cather," she said, at last, "that you don't really respect women."

"What! Not respect them! Not respect your aunt, or you girls? You must be crazy."

"I don't mean that you are incapable of gratitude or admiration or loyalty," Sarah explained. "I merely mean that you don't respect the abilities of women. You think we're all right on a pedestal somewhere out of your way, but you won't accept us as comrades or competitors. Now I'd be wretched on a pedestal. It's too insecure a place. I might topple some day, and then where would I be? I've been working to make myself into a reasonable and useful human being, and I don't think I'm a subject for amusement when I say that I want to go to work, and that I'm anxious to help out my uncle."

"I suppose you'll be wanting to vote, and all that sort of thing."

"Very likely."

"You won't keep your friend, Mrs. Kermott, on those terms."

"Principles are more to me than friends."

"Far be it from me to oppose a lady," Lance said, with exasperating politeness. "May I expect you and your assistants to-morrow?"

"You need n't expect me, Lance," said Fay. "I'm going to Madison to-morrow. Of course, if there's anything I can do, call on me. I thought it would be a great lark helping out down here while dad was away, but I would n't come for anything with you feeling that way about it. I can't work where people are cross."

"I don't want to desert Sarah," said Peg, the tears in her eyes. "But it's no fun coming down here if we're to be scolded."

"Tut, tut!" said Rothaker Kipp. "Nobody's scolding you, Miss Peggy. Nobody shall scold you while I'm round."

"It's all right, Mr. Kipp," said Peg, shaking the old man's inky hand. "You and I understand each other."

"Do I understand, now," asked Sarah, "that I may go to work *to-day?* Of course, Lance, I should never have dreamed of insisting if I had thought you could n't use me. But I feel sure you can."

"You may report at one to-day if you like. There's more than enough to do, so far as that goes."

"Thank you. Good-bye, Mr. Kipp! Good-bye, Lance! I'm sorry you don't like the way I'm doing."

"Well, it's better I should say what I think, is n't it? I don't wish to sail under false colors. I know you think I'm narrow, but there's a great deal more to it than narrowness, I can tell you that."

"I know that, Lance. You like the old type of woman; the sort that did n't have any sense of values. They used to die of sweetness, those women. They had a perfect passion for martyrdom. They just sat

round and gathered mildew. Now I'm not that kind —"

"Oh, do come on, Sarah!" cried Fay. "You two will quarrel all night!"

"It is n't a quarrel," protested Sarah; "it's a fundamental difference of opinion." She walked home, slightly in advance of her cousins, with her head in the air.

At one o'clock that afternoon she was on hand. Lance was at the desk.

"Miss Brewster, your assignment for the day will be the Old Settlers' picnic at Deitche's Grove. We can stand three quarters of a column."

Deitche's Grove! Sarah wondered how to go there. Grandmother B. had gone to the picnic, but friends had driven her.

"I'll ask some one on the street," thought Sarah. "I've always understood that editors hate to give information."

So she asked Harold Ferguson, who told her, and she got on the car and sat absorbed in her thoughts till she was roused by the

call of the conductor. She had plenty to think about. She went over that foolish difference between herself and Lance. He wanted her to "walk in beauty, like the night" — to be a supine creature, wearing lovely clothes, and playing the harp for his diversion when he had the time to listen. Mrs. Kermott, too, wished her to be a mere decoration to life. Once again, and more meaningly than before, the spirit of Sarah Brewster broke loose from influence. For years she had been doing things as others wished her to do them, and trying to think as others wished her to think. But from now on she meant to live according to her own ideas and instincts, even if it involved the sacrifice of her dearest friends. She was going to be Sarah Brewster, and no one else.

When Sarah returned to the office just before supper time, she had a number of excellent anecdotes that she had gathered from the pleasant old people with whom she had spent the afternoon. Grandmother

Babcock had introduced her to everybody, and she had talked with some of the old men, and had waited on their wives, and altogether had had a delightful time.

Lance Cather had passed a miserable day. To be sure, he had been very busy, but in the background of his thoughts was this strange difference with Sarah. What, he kept asking himself, did the girl want? Why should any sensible girl object to being cared for — yes, and worshiped — by the loyal men associated with them? Lance had been reared in the idea that a woman was to be hedged round and protected, and he was intensely hurt and irritated by Sarah's declaration of independence. How inconsistent she was! Robert Carberry had told him that she was in two minds whether to go to college or not. Now here she was, suddenly as restless and independent as himself. Lance looked about him for some other comparison, but he came back to that finally. Yes, she was like himself. She wanted to do things on her own account.

"It was as if she suddenly spoke out in

her own voice," Lance mused. "I suppose we've been superimposing our ideas on her."

When she came into the office, her whole manner conveying the impression that she was out for herself now, and that her interest in life did not particularly include him, Lance felt a sharp thrust of pain and resentment.

"I've some fine anecdotes from the old people," Sarah said, in her clear, impersonal voice, "and a complete list of those present. It will be worth our while to run a couple of columns about the picnic. Don't you think so? They'd love to have some of their treasured stories in print, and it would be interesting to them to keep the list of names. The list won't be so long next year, very likely. I'm sure everybody there would like to have a copy of the paper, or perhaps several copies."

"A column is all we can spare," said Lance, in very editorial accents. "Condense your anecdotes, or pick out one or two of the best; and mention only the more prominent persons present."

"Oh," cried Sarah, "what a shame to differentiate between those nice old dears! It might hurt their feelings. Perhaps it's the last outing some of them will ever have."

"But you must remember," said Lance, "that the 'Chronicle' is run in the interests of all its patrons, not of a few."

"If I were running a paper in a little town like this," said Sarah, "I'd make it as fascinatingly local as I could. You say you have n't room for two columns on these pioneers, but you 'll run a lot of telegraph items about the most uninteresting things. Perhaps a baby will have fallen out of a three-story window in Cleveland; or a cock will have been born with two heads in Wabaunsee County. What of it? There is n't human interest in that unless the readers know the parents of the baby and the owners of the cock. Human interest is the thing, Mr. Cather, — I call you Mr. Cather because you call me Miss Brewster, — no matter whether you think so or not. I happen to know that that is my uncle's ideal of a

paper, too, but he's been so wretched for a long time past that he's let go of things, and he has n't had any reporter who wanted to write the way I do. Now, I know all you are going to say about discipline, and I am perfectly aware that you think me insubordinate. But just the same, if you'll let me write the sort of article I want to write, and will cut down on your Cleveland babies and two-headed cocks, I'll give you an article that the people will remember."

"I make it a point never to oppose a lady, as I said before," Lance replied. "And that, as you will readily perceive, is why it is embarrassing to have one round the office."

Sarah sank back in her seat and looked at him in dismay. After a minute she took out her knife and began sharpening her pencil.

"Well, Mr. Editor," she said, "you can have just as short and just as dull an article as you please. You've taken the enthusiasm out of me, if that's what you wanted to do. Of course, your not opposing a lady is just a part of the old cant, and shows how unfair

you are. As for my being in the office, you know that I am as capable as you of learning this business, and that I want as much as you to help uncle. So I shall stay unless he bids me leave. And the quicker you and I stop wrangling and get on a good working basis, the better."

Lance looked at his watch, and said, "It's almost supper time, and you'd better take your notes and go home. You can write your story this evening, and I'll send up for it. It won't do for you to be coming down here at night, you know. Your uncle would n't like it. And besides, I'd be obliged to see you home, or to send Birdie Ferguson with you."

"Why would you? The cars, if I wanted to ride, would carry me straight from the office to the house."

"None of your relatives would want you to be out alone at night," said Lance. "And I could n't allow it, either."

"Oh!" gasped Sarah angrily. "May I inquire what you —"

"I promised Mr. Carberry that I'd look

after his family in his absence," said Lance, "and so far as I'm allowed to, I mean to do it."

Sarah rose with dignity.

"I would n't think of standing between you and your duty. I'll go now; and you may send for the copy, as you suggest. One column, as dull as possible. Are those the orders, Mr. Cather?"

"You know they are not."

Just then Sarah's sense of humor made her want to shake Lance by the shoulders and cry out, "What silly, silly monkeys we are!" And at that same moment, Lance longed to say, "Forgive me. I have pretended not to understand, but I do. And though I can't yet agree, I think you are brave, and true, and sweet." But his pride held him back, and they merely nodded a good-night, as Sarah gathered up her belongings and took herself out of the office.

No doubt she would have written a charming, gay, sympathetic article that the old pioneers would have liked, Lance thought to

himself as he ate his lonely supper. It would have been the sort of article that would have brought letters of appreciation to the "Chronicle," and that would have induced the old people to purchase copies to send away to their relatives. Yes, no doubt she was right about it, — a village paper should be "splendidly local." But how had she found it out? Why had he not appreciated it himself before? Had he taken on the tone of Robert Carberry's jaded mind? Was it time for him to wake up, and to show this aggressive young woman that he was not so heavy and slow as she thought him? Could he not serve Robert Carberry better by being less a reflex of Carberry and more of an individual himself? He had been going along in a self-satisfied way. Every one, apparently, had approved of him. Mr. Carberry and Mrs. Kermott had been only too kind and tolerant. But now he was confronted by a critic, and the criticism stung him into activity.

"She's right about it," he decided. "It's time the 'Chronicle' got a move on it. It

ought to be a force in the community. It ought to wake up the whole town."

He pocketed his pride and went to a telephone.

"Is Miss Brewster at home? Oh, that you, Fay? Thank you for your copy. It was quite all right. You'll not be down to-morrow, you say. Going to Madison. Very well. Just call Sa — Miss Brewster to the telephone, will you? She's busy, is she? You mean she does n't want to come. Well, tell her for me that I've been thinking it over, and I'll run at least a column and a half about the Old Settlers. She'd better send me a full list of names. Tell her to select the very best anecdotes, and to tell them as briefly as possible. They're snappier when they're short."

"There," he said to himself, as he hung up the telephone, "now I have done it. I've given her leave to wipe her feet on me, I suppose! And yet she was right, and it seemed only decent to say so."

But Sarah was taking the matter in a different spirit.

"It was generous of him, was n't it, Fay?" she cried. "And I'll be careful not to take advantage of the situation. Do you know, I want to make this the very best piece of work I ever did?"

And she sat down to tell the story of the Old Settlers' picnic, and to give the atmosphere of it — the good cheer, and the pathos, and the old-time essence — as perfectly as she could, and yet to use no superfluous word in doing it. As she wrote, her heart warmed toward those brave, simple, kindly old souls who had borne the danger and the toil of that early day when their pleasant village was but a wilderness. When, at ten o'clock, a messenger boy came for her copy, she prided herself on the fact that, by judicious condensation, she had kept her story within the column and a half allowed. And she knew that it would please those for whom it was written.

IX

EXPERIMENTS

THE next day confirmed Sarah's hopes. The old settlers approved her article, and bought many copies of the paper. Moreover, a few of them wrote to congratulate the young writer on her ability to enter so well into the spirit of the occasion.

It really was a very pretty little triumph for Sarah; and Lance, to show his magnanimity, printed the letters in the correspondents' column. He went so far as to talk over the programme for the Sunday paper with his self-appointed assistant.

"But we can't have the whole paper given up to fads, you know," he protested smilingly. "I'll admit that you seem to be scoring just now, but people would soon grow tired of a sentimental paper."

"Well, we'll not let it become sentimental. I'm sure all I want is to see it have a general

interest. Now, take the matter of baseball. There are three or four nines of small boys in town. Why not report their games, as well as those of the big boys? Then, too, if you don't mind having me go on with the criticism, I think the society columns could be improved."

"Yes, I suppose they could, but Mr. Carberry never seemed to care much for that sort of thing."

"But his readers do. I know just how the girls feel about it. Let Fay undertake the society column for you. She'll have perfect taste about it. She told me last night that she'd be willing to lend a hand now and then. However, there's been a prize offered for the best sketch for mural work by the Small Park Association in Chicago. The painting is to go on the auditorium of one of the public playrooms, and Fay wants to compete; so she'll be rather taken up with that. But the society column would be just enough to fill in nicely."

Throughout the long, hot summer Sarah

remained faithfully at her post. She did what she was told, besides what she herself devised. To each task she brought a certain buoyant originality, sympathy, and imagination. She was true to her facts, but she perceived and reported more than the mere facts. She had the ability to awaken the little town to new possibilities in itself of romance and importance.

As for Lance, he noted editorially with a sharpened sense of appreciation every indication of enterprise or expanding commercial life. People outside the town got the idea that Lac du Laiche was "looking up," and came to see what was happening. Some of them remained.

A new schoolhouse at the west end of the town was contracted for. The street-railway bonds sold quickly. The Rutherford Road, for many years a welter of mud in winter and a mass of dust in summer, was macadamized. The young editor of the "Chronicle" and his assistant had it in their power to push every good measure, and they did it with enthusiasm.

Letters came almost daily from Robert Carberry. He was getting better, but since all was going so well at home, he would remain away a little longer.

Sarah worked more devotedly than ever. She wanted to let her uncle see that, even if his strength should fail, there would be ways of carrying on the paper he had founded, and of keeping the home in which his love centered. And she was able to report rather an exciting increase of subscribers. Beyond question she and Lance had been able to interest certain groups of persons whom Mr. Carberry had not thought of reaching.

Between Lance and herself there remained a certain stiffness. They worked together for the good of the paper, and they did their best, partly, perhaps, to show each other how well they could do. But the confidential relationship that had existed before was gone.

Meanwhile, other matters were faring well. Both Lance and Mrs. Kermott had a photograph from Mr. Le Grand Cather that told

its own tale of good health and good spirits.

"Sarah," Mrs. Kermott declared, "we were right about it. The man's made over — not wholly, maybe, but sufficiently."

It was Saturday evening, and Sarah was dining and spending the night with her friend, according to their well-established habit. The night was hot; after dinner the two sat on the broad piazza, from which they could see two arms of the sprawling lake. Out upon it were dozens of boats the lights of which danced on the dark waters like vagrant stars.

"Think of your being willing to sit up here with an old woman when you might be down there with the young people! Why is it that you are n't there? Your cousins will be on the water to-night. Only you and I sit here, and —"

"And enjoy ourselves."

"And Lance does n't call any more when you are with me, I observe. Has there been any difference of opinion between you obstinate but interesting young persons?"

"Lance is a romanticist like yourself, Mrs. Kermott. And he admires you beyond words. He said courtesy and charm would die with you. I'm too energetic and independent for him. He wanted me to 'come out' properly — although what I'd have 'come out' for in Lac du Laiche, I don't know. Was it supposed that I would then sit round and hold bunches of violets in my white hands till somebody married me? If I'd stayed back East, of course something like that would have had to happen. Well, it was n't my fault that I came out here and became a practical person. However, if uncle had n't fallen ill, I might have shown myself to be more conventional. I know my stepmother is shocked. She writes very frequently, and she always says, very affectionately, that she is shocked. She promises me that if I will come to Munich, she'll bring me out there in a year or two. But I tell her it's too late; I'm a working girl, and have lost my eiderdown ways."

"Eiderdown ways! As if you ever had them! What a child of your time you are! I

also was a child of mine, but my time is passing. My ways and ideas are the old ones. They soon will be obsolete. And yet, after all allowances are made, Sarah, may I say that I think you a little odd?"

Sarah gave a little scream of laughter and hugged Mrs. Kermott. "Odd?" she cried. "You ought to know, dear thing, for you have made a fine art of oddity. Why, that's why I fell in love with you the first minute I saw you. I thought you were the oddest and the most splendid human being I ever had seen."

"Sarah," said Mrs. Kermott, with an effort at severity, "take your arms away from my neck. You are choking me. When you and I first met, you certainly were the shyest, proudest, most inquisitive, most elaborate person of your age."

"Well," said Sarah, with a sigh of contentment, "we seem to belong together, don't we?"

Mrs. Kermott dropped her grand air.

"We do," she said sincerely.

Robert Carberry was coming home.

The Lac du Laiche "Chronicle" had announced it, and every one in town, from Bill Cummings, the hack-driver, to Mr. Morrow, the mayor, was pleased. Mr. Carberry had played a part in the village that no one else could take. It was not that he tried to act as guide, or that he posed as a philosopher, but friend he incontestably was. Nay, he was elder brother to the young,' and younger brother to the old. So, when the day of his return dawned, a manifest excitement stirred what may be termed his constituency.

At the "Chronicle" office, Rothaker Kipp had worried his compositors and pressmen, Ferguson and Sarah had labored over their copy, and Lance had toiled industriously — for they all wished to welcome the chief with a fine edition of his paper.

At the house, Peg and Grandmother B. had conducted a brilliant refurbishing. The silver was polished, the curtains were spotless, every vase was filled with fresh flowers. And Ellen McInerney had prepared the

dishes most in favor with her master and her mistress.

Fay had not taken part in these observances. She had worked early and late for days in order to complete a panel for the living-room chimney-front. It was a study of chrysanthemums, a rich-toned decoration that presented not so much the veritable aspect of the flowers as the happy, sun-warmed spirit of them.

Balancing on the top of a stepladder, and setting in the staples with hands that trembled, she placed the panel in the chimney-front herself. Sarah, hastening home from the office, saw her there.

"You 've barely time to dress!" she called. "The train's on time. I just telephoned. There's Mrs. Kermott, come for Grandma B."

Fay, leaning forward precariously, could do no more than mumble. Then the panel swung into place.

"Oh, lovely!" acclaimed Sarah, snatching a look at it, as she tore off her gloves and

undid her collar. "How it melts into the reds and browns of the room! You're getting on, my lady. You'll be a painter yet."

Fay made a flying descent from the ladder, shrieked to Ellen to "tote" it away, ran to the far end of the room to view her work, and then, with her eyes shining and her golden hair disheveled, dashed to the dressing-room.

Peg was there, trimly gowned in her tan linen, and smart with belt and buckles and new brown pumps, quite ready to lend a hand.

"You look all harnessed up, Peggy," said Sarah. "Have you a corner in leather?"

"Don't abuse me," warned Peg, "or I'll not button your blouse." But she was ready with it in her hand, and she slipped it on Sarah the moment her cousin had dried her glowing arms and face. Then she turned her attention to her belated sister.

"Fay always begins her toilet by taking a turpentine bath," she declared, as Fay tried to cleanse her hands of paint. "Do you want

your green linen, Fay? That hand-made blouse? White shoes? Hat with green scarf? Right. There you are. Put on the finishing touches as you go."

"You certainly deserve your name, Fay," said Sarah admiringly. "All in fairy-green! I'm glad you had n't time to comb your hair. I like it in a yellow cloud."

"So do I," agreed Peg. "Come, girls, come! I'm going to lock the door and carry the key with me, so that mamma can't see how we've left the room."

As the three ran down the hill toward the station, Sarah was conscious of a feeling of annoyance at her superior height.

"What a bean-pole I am!" she thought. "I never look girlish and sweet, like these two dears. That's why every one takes me so seriously. Who would n't take a factory chimney seriously? I wish to goodness I could shrink."

But she need not have wished to be other than she was. She did not in the least realize it, but she had grown to be very lovely. Her

long face with its dark skin was lighted by a pair of remarkably deep and brave eyes. Supple, graceful, yet not too swift in her movements, she had qualities that caught and held the attention. Now, in her frock and coat of dark-blue India silk, with her wide hat with its blue plumes, she was charming, even though she did not know it.

From a window of the train now drawing up to the station, Robert Carberry saw the three girls.

"There they are, Ada!" he called to his wife. "Late, as usual, and running like rabbits. Are n't they the beauties?"

"But why are there so many people at the station, Robert?" his wife inquired. "See, there's Dr. Davies, and Sam with him. And there's Lance. Is n't he distinguished looking? And there's dearest mother with Mrs. Kermott, bless her heart!"

"And old yard-wide, all-wool Rothaker. And Bill Cummings, waving his arms off. That means we're to ride with him. And Higgins, — state senator, you remember, —

and every one in town, nearly. Here, hand me your bag, dear. We're off."

They were in the midst of their smiling friends and neighbors, and had heard their names called with affectionate salutations on every side, before either of them realized that the little crowd had gathered in their honor.

"Why, you don't mean," Robert Carberry cried, "that you all came down to meet us?"

"Whom did you think we'd come to see? Nick Mellen? Say, Nick, Carberry thought you were giving a pink tea."

"Carberry, you robust renegade, I'll not get a fee out of you for the next five years!" declared Dr. Davies.

"Bob," said the mayor, "we've been cleaning the town from stem to stern, getting ready for you. I actually believe we're tidy enough to suit even Mrs. Carberry. Hand over your bags to my boy George. He's always hanging round your house, and you'd better take this chance to make him earn his salt."

THREE VOCIFEROUS GIRLS WERE ALL BUT DEVOURING HER

George Morrow, seemingly languid as always, came forward, with his wistful heart in his eyes, to receive the greeting that Ada Carberry never failed to give this motherless lad, who had grown up under the shadow of her compassion. And that greeting she succeeded in giving him now, although three vociferous and tearful girls were all but devouring her, and although she saw her mother gazing eagerly at her from Mrs. Kermott's surrey.

"You and Mrs. Carberry drive up with me, Bob," urged Mayor Morrow.

"No, no, I want you both!" called Mrs. Kermott. "Am I not to be given any chance at you at all?"

But Robert Carberry had not forgotten the frantic gestures of his friend Bill.

"Then I go with him, too!" declared the mayor. "We'll turn my vehicle over to the young people, and help Mrs. Carberry in with Mrs. Kermott."

So the vehicles filed up the hill. At the Carberry gate the friends would have de-

parted had not Grandmother Babcock protested against any such desertion.

"I've enough cake to entertain the whole county," she declared, "and there's grape juice by the gallon!"

The afternoon was too beautiful for a mere house to prove inviting, so the guests swarmed to the far-reaching lawn behind the bungalow. The great locust tree that used to tap on the window of the attic where the girls slept had been destroyed when the old house burned. But the Ben Davis apple tree still spread wide its triplicated trunk, although the tree-studio had been pulled down years before.

The lawn showed green and dull gold under the rays of the westering sun; the mellowing orchard made a fit background for the scene; and far below, the lake, like an old mirror of yellowed glass, reflected the vine-hung banks.

Gradually the guests grew quiet, as their first enthusiasm yielded to something more tender. The deeper sense of joy that had

prompted their welcome held them, in the presence of that home, and that family, which, by the grace of God, was not yet divided.

"Come!" commanded Mrs. Kermott at last, when conversation had passed to song and song to silence. "Let us go to our own homes and suppers, and leave the Carberrys to theirs."

So the guests made their way again to the street, where the patient horses waited. Then, on the golden air — for the sun was setting regally — floated the voice of Robert Carberry, full and vibrant with its old-time courage: —

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot — "

The voices, old and young, bass and treble, took it up: —

"And never brought to min' — "

Singing it still, the guests drove on down the pleasant village street, and the Carberrys, more moved than they cared to show, slowly made their way to their little, low-

lying home. But the melody had not ceased. Some one was singing it on the lawn — Ellen, the faithful, gathering up plates and glasses, and giving a good Hibernian accent to the Scottish words: —

"And days o' lang syne."

X

REWARDS

It was Robert Carberry's first day at home, — a Sunday, as it happened, — and he said to himself that it would be pleasant to look over some of the magazines and pamphlets that had been laid aside for him. So he got his paper-knife, his favorite porch chair, and his little reading-table, and arranged them all to his satisfaction upon the porch at the back of the house.

The place was alive with birds, which were on their way to Palm Beach and other pleasant winter resorts, and an enormous flight of golden-brown butterflies having selected the Carberry yard as a place of Sunday recreation, the whole lawn and orchard fluttered with wings. As for that, the lake, ruffled by a brisk little wind, seemed to be fluttering, too.

"So many forms of life, mother!" he ex-

claimed, as Grandmother B. paused at his side a moment.

"So many lovely forms of it," she agreed. "Is there nothing you want that you have n't here, now, in the home you 've come back to?"

He turned an almost boyish face to her.

"You've guessed it!" he cried. "I want my mother!"

"Well, I happen to know that your mother is as homesick for you as she can be. She thought she was never going to see you again, and now it seems as if she could n't stand it, being away out there in California. Will offers to send her home if you are ready for her."

"Ready for her? Well, if you were to give me my choice of all things just now, I 'd choose mother. Think how stern she 'll look, and how she 'll thunder away at us all, with her heart simply bursting with delight at being home! But tell me, Grandmother B., dear, are you absolutely willing to have Grandmother C. return? Did n't you and she sometimes have what might be called, if ladies of less dignity were involved, a little set-to?"

"Robert Carberry, I'm surprised at you! Your mother and I understood each other perfectly. The interchange of ideas to which you refer was merely a mental exercise."

She went away, to sit alone among the trees and watch the birds. A few moments later Fay appeared. Her face was downcast.

"What ho, daughter! Why do you wear such a forbidding expression?"

"The mail has come, papa —"

"So you've been to the post-office? What were you expecting, Fay, that made you interested in mail on a Sunday?"

"It was about my mural design. You know a prize was offered by the Small Park Association in Chicago for the best design for a proscenium arch in a recreation house. Well, I sent a design. I worked over it half the summer."

"Good."

"And it's just been rejected."

"Good."

"Why, Father Carberry!"

"Why, Daughter Carberry! Of course it's

good. This is no time for you to be winning in contests. This is the time for you to be studying. Let me see, you should be in Chicago the latter part of next week, I believe?"

"But I gave up all thought of going to the Art Institute after you fell ill. I could n't think of going in the circumstances."

"It's not necessary for you to think of it. All you have to do is to go. Of course Mrs. Kermott had a hand in it. She offers you a scholarship at the Art Institute for three years. It only remains for me to pay your living expenses. That I find that I can afford to do. It has been years, Fay, since your old dad has been able to do a piece of literary work. But this summer, while I was loafing round under the pines, I wrote a series of articles about pioneer life. And the whole series was accepted by a magazine in which I shall be very proud to have the articles appear. The return was very generous. I have placed this sum in the bank to your credit. I think it will carry you through the year nicely."

"Oh, what a dear, what an unutterably dear dear you are!" Fay cried.

"Well, if you think all the thanks are coming to me, you're mistaken. Your mother spent a large part of her summer making your outfit for you, my lady; making artist's blouses, and sewing-school frocks, and street frocks, and Sunday frocks."

"Oh, you don't mean it, dad! All the time I thought you two were resting, you were really working for me. It's beautiful of you, but it's cruel, too. Why were n't you resting, dad? You both needed it so!"

"We were rested by the fact that we were really doing something we wanted to do, and not something that we had to do. We were as happy as larks are supposed to be. But no lark really could feel as we felt when we knew that we were going to be able to let our yellow-haired girl have the thing she wanted. Just concentrate on your work, that's all we ask. And I have a particular reason for asking you to concentrate."

"And what is that?"

"Well, I learned from Mr. Morrow last night that his seemingly languid but really very alert young son, George, has decided to go to the University of Chicago. Now I may be wrong, but I imagine that he was not altogether uninfluenced in his choice by the fact that you were going to the Art Institute in the same city."

"O papa!"

"I'm facing facts, young lady. And I don't object to facts. But I say you are young, you are going to be there alone. Your mother will take you over and settle you with Mrs. Underwood, an old school friend of hers, who consents to let you become one of her household. But I bid you, speaking as one sensible person to another, to concentrate on your work. Life and joy clamor at all the windows, at your age. Don't I know? Don't I remember? No use to pretend that you young people are as sensible as we old ones want you to be. But I put you on honor to *work*. It will, as Sarah says, give you time to grow up. And I shall put George on honor, too."

Fay came close to her father, and dropped a tearful kiss on his forehead.

"You can trust me, darling," she said. "I'll work. So will George. I'll never do anything that you don't approve of. Truly."

"That settles it. I'll think no more about that matter. Now, whisk away, will you? I'll run my eye through these magazines."

But Fay had hardly gone when Lance Cather arrived.

"You, Lance? Looking for the old man, or for the younger members of the family?"

"For you, sir, if you are not too busy."

"Why, this is my reception day. Hitherto, my callers have been the members of my own family. But I find them very interesting, as — as I dare say you do."

"Yes, sir. It's a wonderful thing to have ladies like Grandmother B. and Mrs. Carberry and Peg in the family, is n't it?"

"Just what I was thinking a while back."

"It must be a terrible thing, when a man has set his heart on the finest girl he knows, to — well, to lose her, you know."

"Yes. But as a general proposition, I should say that if a fellow loses a girl, it's because he has n't really set himself to win her. He's relied too much upon his personality to make the argument for him. The type of woman wants to be won by ability."

"Yes."

A silence fell. Then Lance spoke again:—

"I came up, Mr. Carberry, to see if I could have a few weeks' leave of absence. I want to do some stump-speaking before the elections. The committee has asked me to. You see, a few nights ago I happened to be in the hall when some speeches were made against Mayor Morrow and the ideas he stands for. I heard a good deal of misrepresentation and blackguarding, and the first thing I knew I found myself on my feet, trying to refute those charges. I'm rather hot-blooded, I suppose, and when I'm angry I find myself loquacious, too. Some one was present who told Mr. Morrow, and he wants to know if I can't stump the county. I'd need some time to prepare myself, that is, to get the

facts and arguments in my mind, though I'd depend on the inspiration of the moment for my speech."

"Why, of course I can spare you, Lance. You've a vacation coming to you, anyway."

"But who'll take my place in the office? There's only young Ferguson there now."

"And Sarah. Sarah is there — very much, indeed. I've been keeping my eye on her work, from day to day, and it strikes me as being about as vivid and engaging as anything I ever read in the way of newspaper work."

"But I did n't suppose that you'd let her go on with that work after you got home."

"Why not? It's her own selection."

"But would n't you rather see her at home?"

"The question is n't precisely what I would prefer. It's what Sarah would prefer. And she does her work well, does n't she?"

"I should say she did. Why, she's brilliant."

"Then she shall help me out while you are

electioneering. Do you ever think of going into politics, Lance?"

"I do think of it sometimes. If I could be in with honest and constructive men, I'd like nothing so much in the world. Why, what is there better than representing the people, and working for them? We don't hold politics in enough respect nowadays, do we?"

Robert Carberry smiled at his enthusiastic friend. "No, we don't, for a fact. And you are the sort of man I'd like to see dedicated to the service. I don't say you'll not suffer, and I don't say that you'll not be made old before your time, but my love of country prevents me from discouraging you. If we can get men with motives such as yours to run things for us, we must accept the sacrifice."

"I don't look on it as a sacrifice. It's a career; a glorious career, even if a man suffers personal defeat."

"All right, let's see what you can do. You can try yourself out in this campaign. If you've a talent for the work, it will show

itself. Ah-ha, who comes here? It is my fair niece, Sarah! Maiden, whom seek you?"

"You, uncle. Oh, I did n't know you had company."

"But I have; one Lance Cather, politician. Sarah, you and I are going to run the 'Chronicle' for a month, while Lance goes campaigning. And I suppose we are to keep the paper up to the pace that you have set for it."

"I hope so, uncle."

"I heard on every hand last evening that you two had made friends for the paper while I was away. It always was my conviction that the young could teach the old —"

"Old, uncle? Who's old? He is n't a bit old, is he, Lance?"

"He'll never be old," Lance affirmed.

"Of course he won't. Why, uncle, of course I'll help you out. I'll not be so afraid of doing things now that you're home to keep me from making mistakes. But how about Mrs. Kermott? She has her mind set on my going away with her. Of course I want to do anything she wishes me to, but I'm de-

voted to my work on the paper. I'd like to keep right on, if you'd let me. Europe can wait, you know."

"But can Mrs. Kermott wait? Don't you owe it to her and to the love she gives you to go with her while she's still vigorous and capable of enjoying travel? However, I'll ask her to postpone her going for a few weeks."

"But, uncle, dearest —"

"Say no more, lady, say no more. The law allows and the court decrees that you are to accept the blessings which Heaven showers upon you. Get you to Naples, to Rome, to the Tuscan Hills. See the world for yourself, and see it for me, who will never see it. If I had a beggar's bowl, I'd go from place to place, content to be nothing if I might see all."

Lance watched Robert Carberry with the light of hero-worship in his eyes; and Sarah smiled wistfully; then, to her intense surprise, she felt the tears come to her eyes, and heard her voice saying, "But it's you I don't want to leave, uncle. How can I leave you?"

"Look here!" exclaimed her uncle. "This breaking home ties is worse than breaking a yoke of oxen."

Some one burst into a peal of laughter. They all looked up. Peg was trailing up from the lake, her paddle over her shoulder.

"You all look like owls in captivity!" she exclaimed. "Don't they, Sam?"

Sam Davies's full-moon face rose above the bank, and he came running along, red-faced and happy. His arms were laden with books and a lunch hamper.

"What are you doing here, Sam?" demanded Lance. "I thought you were off to the University of Wisconsin, looking up rooms and a roommate, and all that sort of thing."

"I go to-morrow," Sam replied. "I'll have time hanging on my hands, even then."

"I'll be the only one left!" Peg cried. "Except Lance. But I'm not a bit sorry about that. I'm going to have dad and mother all to myself for one good long winter. Scat, Sarah, scat! Get off the arm of dad's chair, and let me sit there!"

"Where is your mother, Pegeen?" asked her father, as he drew his girl beside him. "I have n't seen a thing of her for an hour."

"I've been on the lake, but still I know perfectly well what she's doing. She's in the very ruck and reek of domesticity. Like as not she's fallen so low as to count her napkins. If she has n't done that, she's just sitting round, looking at home. Mother's affection for home is simply cloying."

"Let's go find her," said Sam. "She's sure to ask if we don't want some cold lemonade. And she might read to us. I tell you what, Peg, it's fine to have her home again."

"Look at Grandmother B., sleeping among her birds and butterflies!" said Sarah. "Oh, I *must* get my camera. What a lovely picture she makes!"

She ran for her camera, and Lance arose.

"I must go, Mr. Carberry. Thank you for your consent to my plan."

"Consent? Coöperation, you mean. That's what you and I must do, Lance; we must

coöperate. I have no son, and in a way you stand to me in place of one."

"But I'm afraid I've made some bad blunders. I've made blunders on the paper — "

"Of course. Every one does. That's the way we live, making blunders and rectifying them."

"But I've made a blunder about Sarah, too. You see, I've grown up with old-fashioned ideas about women. I was taught to protect them, and to treat them as something apart and above us men. But Sarah has other ideas. She wants to be on a level with us — a comrade, you know. And I'm sure she's shown she's as capable as any one of her age. But we fell out about it, and we can't seem to make up."

"It must have been interesting," said Mr. Carberry, with no particular show of sympathy.

"Interesting? It was very distressing."

"Oh, well, it will make a story to tell in years to come. Get along, Lance. Sarah will

need you to help take her picture of grandmother. As for me, since I'm not to be allowed to read, I shall go to sleep. That you, Ada? Don't you speak to me, I warn you. Go off with those young things that you have in tow. I'm a sleepy man, and I've been made to act as an arbiter of destiny. What's that? I'm the arbiter of your destiny? Not a bit of it, Ada Babcock Carberry. If ever a woman ran the ship, you run it. You look modest, but you're the commander. Now, don't you speak another word to me."

He lay back in his chair, his eyes half-closed. He could see Lance and Sarah creeping along the lawn, whispering, so as to disturb neither the white-headed sleeper nor the winged things about her. He could hear Fay singing in her bright soprano, in her room, could hear the murmur of his wife's voice, and the voices of Sam and Peg; and, above all, the high, fine voices of the summer day.

"The stream of life," he murmured. "How full and how beautiful its flow!"

And presently he passed from waking consciousness to the blurred yet beautiful consciousness of dreams.

The great ship stood out to sea. In the fair November weather, it nosed its way into the sapphire waste beneath a deep blue sky.

Arm in arm, Mrs. Kermott and Sarah Brewster paced the level deck. They were of a height now, but the older woman, clad in many garments, moved like a proud frigate. Beside her, slender Sarah, in her tweeds, was no more than a little yacht. But in the old eyes and in the young there were dreams; on each face was written expectancy; on each were love and understanding of the other.

"That wind," declared Mrs. Kermott, "is blowing from the Bermudas."

"That sun," said Sarah, "is shining on the Azores."

"And on Tangier, on Tunis, on Arabia."

"Don't go too far round that way," warned Sarah, "or you'll be benighted."

"Well, if I kept on going long enough, I'd find out whether the earth was round or not. It's a point about which I entertain doubts."

"It would be fine to come back to Wisconsin by way of Japan and Hawaii. I suppose we really might do it, might n't we?"

"We might, if we could bear to stay away from home so long."

"That's the rub. We can't tell yet, can we? We'll have to try ourselves out. You know I wanted to stay for a month, at least, in Munich with my stepmother. You can make that convenient, can't you?"

"Yes, of course."

"I want to make up to mamma for those old days when I was so sulky and ungrateful," Sarah explained. "I remember so well how violently — yes, violently is the only word — she used to try to make me love her, and how I would n't. She tried to bring me up as a nice girl should be brought up. I suppose, when she sent me out West in despair, she imagined that she gave me over to bar-

barism. Well, I want her to see that I'm not a barbarian, after all, and I want to tell her that it was you who kept alive in me a remembrance of all the little elaborations and elegancies that she loves. If I remain at all what she so deeply wished me to be, it is you who are responsible for it."

"O Sarah, have I done that for you? The Carberrys have been so much to you that it did n't seem as if there was anything left for me to do."

"Well, there was plenty of opportunity for both you and my relatives to try their hand at reform. But as for mamma, she's fine in her way, and I know you'll be congenial — at least, in spots. She'll be giving solemn little dinners for us, and the baron will be worrying for fear that we'll be *too* American. You must wear your purple velvet and your diamonds, and be as grand as possible. It's a pity I'm too young for jewels, is n't it? Still, might n't I wear my little pearl necklace? I could wear it with that pale-green mull, could n't I? I so like that gown! Oh,

you'll think I'm so rattle-brained; but it is nice to be alive, is n't it?"

"Simply glorious!" agreed Mrs. Kermott. "Tremendous! The earth and the sea, the stars and the wind, sleeping and waking, all are wonderful. And to feel God in them, to walk consciously in the presence of the Lord, that is best of all. Such happiness — such dignity! Do you feel it, Sarah?"

Sarah looked up smilingly, with something shy in her glance. "Yes. It was you who taught me that. All the love you and Uncle Robert and the others give me just seems a part of — of the greater love, you know. You've done so much for me, but I think that was the best thing you did, after all — teaching me that I never could be an orphan, and that there were love and goodness all round me."

Mrs. Kermott cast a lingering look upon Sarah. Her voice trembled a little as she said, "Do you know, child, I think we must never be separated again. I can't stand the thought of living alone. I'm getting too old. My

heart needs sustenance. Remember, you shall inhabit your own soul. I'm something of a tyrant, I know, but I'll not interfere with you. For one thing, I want to see how you'll come out. If you decide to go to some woman's college when we get through with our traveling, I'll keep house for you, and make a place for you to bring your friends."

"O Mrs. Kermott!"

"It will be a great happiness. I really have no one but you, Sarah."

They ceased their pacing, and leaning against the taffrail, watched the deep-hued, quiet sea. People passing looked with interest at this proud, elderly woman, from whose face the light of enthusiasm still shone, and upon the girl beside her, eager, yet restrained.

"Is n't it strange," mused Sarah, "that no matter how far we travel or how many persons we see, our hearts are tied to that queer little Wisconsin town, and our thoughts keep turning back there?"

"It *is* mysterious," replied Mrs. Kermott. "I dare say there are equally interesting persons to be found elsewhere."

"None so interesting to me," declared Sarah. "How did it come that when you had lived in so many wonderful places, and had had so many distinguished friends elsewhere, you chose to live in little Lac du Laiche?"

Mrs. Kermott turned her deep gaze on Sarah, a gaze that suddenly became quizzical. "My reason was a simple one, child. My sweetheart was there."

"Oh!" said Sarah, and then was silent.

The wind might be blowing from the Azores, but it was blowing, too, from the fairy isle of Joys-that-were-to-be. There was a flush on the girl's face as she started away from Mrs. Kermott with a little gesture of apology.

"Ought n't I to be writing some letters?" she asked. "Miss Templeton — Mrs. Vernon, I mean — wanted me to describe everything to her. And — and Lance will be wanting to hear how we found his father and how

the plantation was getting on. Is n't it splendid that we have such good news to send him?"

"Is n't it?" cried Mrs. Kermott, the light of a beautiful understanding in her eyes.

THE END

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